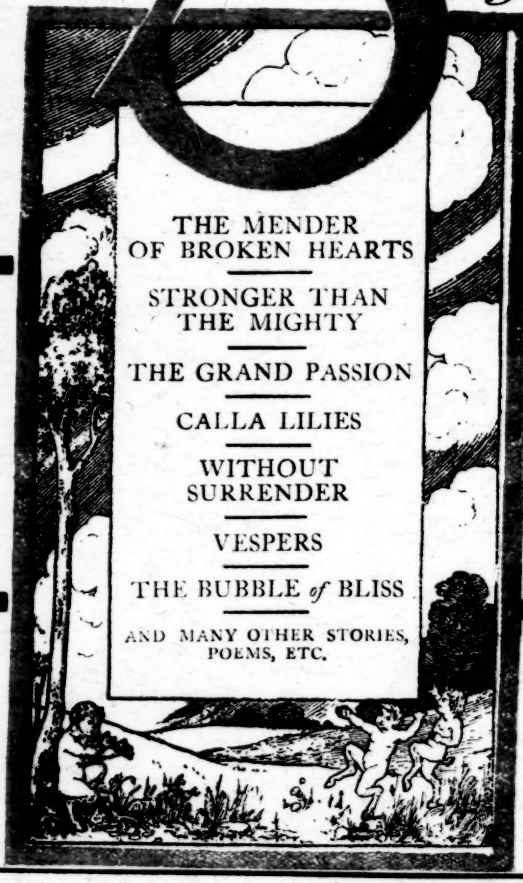
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse. Not to Instruct



THE MENDER OF BROKEN HEARTS

STRONGER THAN THE MIGHTY

THE GRAND PASSION

CALLA LILIES

WITHOUT SURRENDER

VESPERS

THE BUBBLE *of* BLISS

AND MANY OTHER STORIES, POEMS, ETC.

FEBRUARY 1921

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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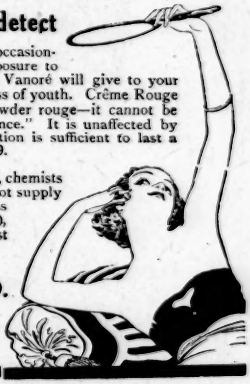

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BOOMER-ANGER

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Personally, until the E.P.D. is removed, I am not, frankly, interested in the profits, therefore, I am making this offer with Austen's compliments. Here at least he will learn a salutary lesson in compulsory economy. And let us hope that he will pass the word to wanton Winnie.

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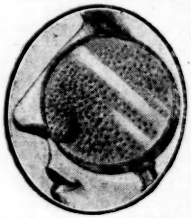
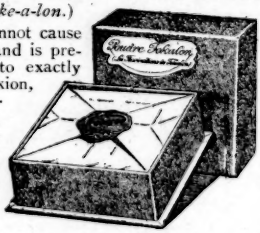


Coarse Pores due to impure Powders and Creams.

HOW TO PREVENT THEM

Use Poudre Tokalon

(*Pronounced Toke-a-lon.*)



This powder cannot cause enlarged pores, and is prepared in shades to exactly suit every complexion, its impalpable fineness, lightness, softness, and absolute freedom from all heavy or gritty particles is ensured by a patent "air-floating" process to which it is subjected after first being screened through silk of the closest mesh.

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"RHEUMATIC AND OTHER DISORDERS HAVE TO GO."

By Bombardier Billy Wells.

(In an Interview.)

Famous Boxer and former Sergeant-Instructor of Physical Training in the Army cautions demobilised men not to discontinue the simple corrective measures which so quickly rid them of their ailments and kept them fit while in the Army.

I have proved that unless a boxer adopts certain precautions against functional ailments and muscular soreness, training is indeed a wearisome business. Ball-punching, rope skipping, and road work are all very essential, but unless considerable care is observed such strenuous exercise will greatly lower the vitality, causing serious weakness and exhaustion. I, personally, take every morning before breakfast a half-teaspoonful of Alkia Saltrates powder dissolved in a little water or in my tea. The powder is so nearly tasteless that its presence in tea cannot be detected at all, and I find this habit ensures freedom from internal troubles altogether, nothing else ever being required. As a sure means of preventing any muscular aches, I also insist upon another preparation, Reudel Bath Saltrates, always being added to the water for both my hot bath and my cold sponge.

Billy Wells.

I am glad to say that as a gymnastic instructor in the Army I found these two preparations almost indispensable for keeping the men free from all internal troubles, aching muscles, etc., to which a "Tommy" is subject during the training period. I also found them to be invaluable for rheumatism, one of the greatest enemies the soldiers had to contend with. Middle-aged men, often living under somewhat damp conditions, fell easy victims to this complaint, also to stiff joints or muscular soreness and aching due to other causes. I, therefore, always endeavoured to impress upon them strongly the value of drinking Alkia Saltrates water regularly and taking frequent hot baths in water containing Reudel Bath Saltrates, these being preventive as well as remarkably curative measures. Both preparations are obtainable from any chemist.

Athletes and soldiers alike are often specially subject to various internal troubles. Although these may arise from widely different causes, the remedy, as a rule, is the same. The regular taking of Alkia Saltrates water as a morning tonic and system-cleansing draught will soon remove any trace of congestion, biliousness, or acidity, and thus ensure the steady nerves, strong digestion, clear eye, and active brain, without which efficient work of any kind cannot be expected of anyone.

Vol. LXIII FEBRUARY, 1921 No. 2

THE MENDER OF BROKEN HEARTS

By M. Hubert

I

"ARE you the mender of broken hearts?" inquired the girl in anguished tones.

The old man, seated, chin in hand, his gaze fixed on a vacancy, nodded; while one long, bony forefinger twisted slowly, endlessly, his snow-white forelock.

The girl poured forth a bitter tale of the mortal hurt she had received, of the villain that had inflicted it.

The old man nodded and stared past her.

"I must wait," she murmured to herself. "They say he does nothing in a hurry." And nursing the broken heart she waited.

II

"ARE you the mender of broken hearts?" wailed the youth with the wan face and the dishevelled hair, halting his steps.

The old man, seated, chin in hand, his gaze fixed on a vacancy, nodded; while one long, bony finger twisted slowly, endlessly, his snow-white forelock.

"He is," volunteered the girl; "but you must wait. No one can hurry him."

Then they fell into a long and earnest discussion of their wounds, and ended by making light of them.

"We shall be back presently," said the youth as they sauntered off.

The old man—smiling to himself—nodded, the bony finger twisting slowly, endlessly, his snow-white forelock.

THE OPPORTUNIST

By J. D. Martin

TWO drowned sailors swept toward the bottom of the sea. One of them looked backward and upward at the light which marked the surface of the ocean and the world he had so lately left. The other sailor began to look around him for pearls.

INCARNATION

By William Drayham

SWEET, there were two I loved,
  Before God smiled and you came;
And one was a shrine of light
  And one was a house of flame.

One had rapture to give
  And one the pity of rest;
One had a passioned heart
  And one had peace at her breast.

At the blameless feet of one,
  Sad for my sins I knelt;
In the other's wild embrace
  Was a Heaven seen and felt.

God is kinder to-day:
  Gone are those lovers two;
But the holy lilies and fire
  Are met and mingled in you.

BLOSSOM-TIME

By Stephen Ta Van

CHAPTER I

WE stopped at Blind Man's Corner in Plattery for gas, my brother and I, on our way toward Franklin-Pierce. I half expected to see the Yankee height of Long George Ellicott stalk from the tin garage as in other days, but a thinly disguised Italian bandit slid out instead, and while he operated I walked across the street to stretch my legs, leaving my brother watching near the car.

It had been a trying journey. The company nullified pleasure in the motion of the drive, which otherwise would have been agreeable enough on that first superheated day of the season. My brother and I had scarcely spoken to each other for half a dozen years, and might never again have met, save for the opportunity of disposing at the same time of some formalities in connection with an inheritance at the town clerk's office of the infinitesimal village from which our father had escaped when young.

Beneath the grease-paint of civilization, education, and the influence of cities we were still New Englanders in reality, as the Russian is a Tartar under his skin, and the Scot a Scot all the way through. We had the Puritans' peculiar harshness, that once set up is almost impossible to mellow; the illogical niggardliness, and an equally illogical capacity, at unexpected times, for saving a brindled hound at the price of a million. Our father's father had raised large crops of corn and oats with infinite labour, and then had let them rot and be eaten by rats, for no other reason than a natural disinclination to give them timely marketing. His stubborn blood had come down to us, making us capable of any Yankee peculiarity.

Thus for a mere detail of time-saving we were not only willing but mutually determined to endure the experience, irritating to males antagonistic from boyhood, of spending a day together in a roadster.

The outline of Plattery's street—main in both name and significance—was familiar. It had changed hardly at all in the five years since I had ceased to spend odd summers in the district, and but slightly in thirty, though the village had descended in the latter period from a small prosperity to semi-desuetude.

The signs on two or three of the little store buildings read differently, and here and there a house had changed the colour of its coat, but the effect in general was permanent, of adjacence to a cemetery. The neat low houses were smug in the sunlight like well-kept mounds. The few children, hurrying and stopping irregularly, squirrel fashion, could not rid the atmosphere of the hint of death.

The street would have been merely paltry without its trees—those stately elms, themselves decaying but still nobly thought-compelling in sweep and line, with which the early New Englander saved his habitat from ugliness as somehow he managed to save his life from utterly disastrous depths like a long-faced acrobat, clad as a tragedian,

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who suddenly, with just the quiver of a smile so faint one cannot be sure he means it, retrieves the balance of the ladder that seemed about to hurl him into the pit.

The porch of the small white house on the corner facing me was close to the street. It was a porch of the kind where old folk sit in warm weather more or less patiently, waiting to die. Wall and floor were bare and characterless, like a boat's or a coffin's, ready for the passing tenant.

A moribund was sitting there, in the hot sun, with a dull-red shawl across his pointed knees. I did not recognize him at first, but at short range it was impossible to mistake the mass of ivory-coloured beard, and the gigantic frame which, though warped and shrunken, advertised to any who had known him in his active days the physical remainder of Jesse Stives.

"What can the old man be doing down here?" I queried, almost shocked. "If ever a man and his environment belonged together, he was the one and Heifer Hill the other. What last blow can have befallen him as an anticlimax? For following upon that tragedy of his, any other would be diminuendo."

I walked to the edge of the porch, which was so narrow that my face was within a few feet of the seated ancient's.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Stives?" I asked. "Don't you remember Steve, the runt who used to come up in the autumn to hunt with Paph and Bim?"

No gleam of recognition lit the vacuity of the ravaged mask.

"Van's boy, Steve," I persisted. "Surely you remember Van?"

It was my father's misfortune to have been labelled in honour of Van Buren, the Fox of Kinderhook, and I thought that the clipped name might slip into a notch in the weakened brain-mechanism. The memories of the very old sometimes skipped a generation or two, recalling distance clearly while forgetting the interim. This relic might remember the young manhood of my father, who had died the year before at seventy. Van and his brothers were well known to him, and addressed him, as did half the populace of that-time Franklin-Pierce and Websterden, as Uncle Jesse. Directly, collaterally and by marriage, he and his first wife, Aunt Emmeline, born a Quickett, were as widely related throughout the countryside as a patriarchal couple of old.

In answer to my second question, he brought his weary, almost expressionless eyes into focus upon me with slow difficulty. A thought crept visibly through his mind, checked, and tottered out.

"I remember ye," he crackled thinly. "Van's boy, Steve. Smart enough ye were, but a rotten egg. It was bad blood all the way through. Your daddy was the best of the lot, but the city cankered him."

A vestige of intelligence was in the speech, but no curiosity; the mass of ivoried beard reposed, the watery gaze went out of focus. Even five years before, the ancient venom would have come with a snap, the voice would have been at least the authentic phantom of a sonorous roar. It was said that in his heyday Uncle Jesse could shout a measured mile, and there was evidence of it well into his seventies.

But nothing remained, save irritability ridiculous in its impotence. The man, once a rampart and a battle-axe, a warrior of mighty thews and a lover of tall women, had outlived himself. Not even the dignity of his tragedy was left.

It was lamentable, but none the less true (I thought), that tragedy, like death, was not of itself dignified. Writer and preacher prattled of the impressiveness of sorrow and death, but in fact neither possessed dignity, aside from that inspired by the character of him who sorrowed or had died. The fierce and jealous God whom Uncle Jesse worshipped more as man to man than as a servant to the Deity—grim Jaaveh of the New England version of the Old Testament—had indeed exacted the last savage vengeance by sending him to the grave unmanned.

Sharply a thought came to me, not of pity for the moribund, who had had points of quality in his time of vigour, but of anger for the shattered happiness of two whom his doomed stubbornness had parted in their youth so many years before. I forgot his former hospitality —which indeed was not wholly disinterested—and moved partly by the yeasty anger, and partly by a modern jester's trivial self-importance, tying a tag to the completed work of Destiny, I prodded him.

"The orchards are in bloom this week, Uncle Jesse. The blossoms are white among the pear-trees, as they were in Mary's time, and when the moon is on them there's a haze that shakes the vision. The young men and girls still wander on the hillsides, in the moonlight and under the trees. They have no fear of shaken vision—they are Youth calling to Youth. Beauty walks with them through the night, Uncle Jesse, and though men may kill Beauty as you did once, they cannot overcome her immortality. Always she will arise again to walk on the hills with Youth, when the blossoms of the pear-trees shine white beneath the lovers' moon. Always, do you hear? You are done for—before many other moons have floated by you will be dust to stop a bunghole, but beauty and love go on."

Under the drive of the words, active memory awoke and the pace of the aged machinery leaped ominously. The feeble claws clutched the arms of the rocker, the wrecked torso stiffened, a faint colour appeared in the waxen cheeks above the blanket of the beard, and the beard gaped, exposing a purple cavity. I was genuinely afraid lest a spasm might be imminent.

Fortunately at the instant the door behind the patriarch opened with a rush and emitted a woman of fifty, a nursing ghoul obviously, in a tight black dress and wearing spectacles and a rectangular intaglio pin.

"What're you doin' here?" she demanded. "Can't you see you're disturbin' Mr. Stives? Be off!"

I retreated ungracefully, to the mild entertainment of my brother, who inquired languidly as we continued on our way:

"Who was the veteran with the beard that you were pestering?"

"Uncle Jesse Stives."

He thought for five seconds.

"Not possible. That old fish can't be alive still. He was Methuselah when I was a baby."

"There he is, all the same, capable of malice and of nothing else."

"He must be nearly ninety," said my brother. "God save us from a fate like that! What was it that happened to him, anyway? I seem to remember hearing about some kind of a tumult in his well-bucket, but I forget what it was. You were just in time to get all that back-to-the-dear-old-farm stuff, but the ten years between us saved me from it. The habit had been broken by the time I came along."

"We have to pass near his old place on the way up," I said. "I'll tell you the story then, it may relieve the monotony. He was quite an elephant in his way, and the woman—God! a flower of passion blooming from an arid soil, Irony personified. There's at least one thing you and I agree on, Dickie—that a lovely woman is a wondrous manifestation."

"I doubt if we agree on the kind of woman, or what she manifests," he said dryly.

"Have patience."

CHAPTER II

We crossed the railroad bridge; turned east and then north into High Street—a side road glorified by elms; passed the gaping windows of the long-vacant canning factory, an optimist's blasted dream; and shot out on the State highroad.

We went smoothly up grade at forty miles, past the swampy gullies fragrant with odours of low woods and ferns, and interspersed with occasional rock-

ridged pastures, that intervened between the shore and the high country.

New England scenery, stale to the dreary denizen, is quick with thrills for the returning emigrant. One may hate permanently certain traits of the people, may even scorn the poverty of the tillage-land, starved by too much thrift through generations; but the landscape of the countryside is ever poignant. No suavity and little warmth exude, but he who was born where stunted spruces overlook the misty meadows needs neither.

This land nurtured the Puritans. Their character was perceptibly influenced by it, and after argument, they remain in the mind as men, not molluscs. Though their ideals were fantastic, they at least aimed at ideals, and fought for them. The zest for battle is in the air and emanates from the soil. The grass of the upland, the fruit of the vine, are fighters; they must be, or starve. And when one comes suddenly upon some perfect bit of beauty, a delicate gentian in a fence-corner, flashing cardinal flowers near a wooden bridge —ah, how the sweetness of the sight is multiplied! We are a bitter and ungracious people, no more easily or often pleased than our land is generous; but our pleasure, like our pain, is sharp and tenacious when it does appear.

Such thoughts, perhaps a little literary, ran through my mind as we mounted the macadam steadily. My brother did not share them. He drove with his mind on the road, which was virtually new to him, equally ignorant of and indifferent to the connotations of the landmarks.

But when, having come nine miles uphill, we topped a rise on which stood a blasted white oak, victim and memorial of the celebrated thunderstorm of Ninety-Three, I gave him warning.

"Off the starboard bow you see the Congregational Church steeple at Franklin-Pierce. From the top of it, according to the saying, you can see land in three counties and the water of Long Island Sound. Yonder to port is Heifer Hill. Take the next turn to the left and cross a stone bridge. I'll show you where Uncle Jesse lived."

"Uncle Jesse?" he said. "Oh, yes, I'd forgotten. I don't know that I'm wild about seeing where he lived. How about getting on to business?"

"Oh, be a good wedding-guest for once," I said. "It won't hurt you, and I'd like to see the place myself. Neither of us is likely to come here again."

He grunted, and twisted the wheel. The car bounced across the bridge, beneath which fidgeted the Monohassett, a slender stream for such a name.

The Hill Farm was the next. It stood not upon an eminence, but against the one from which it took its title. No farmstead could have existed through many Franklin-Pierce winters on the peak of Heifer Hill. Had the position there been tenable, Uncle Jesse would have held it, for he had the physical giant's love of height and width, and a contempt for short men and masked places.

"Build me my barns high so I can see 'em," he used to boom. "I hate them squatty sheds."

Every barn-raising that he held was prolific of size, big in the resultant frame, mighty in entertainment. His buildings dwarfed most others in the township, and the hard cider illuminations got at their liftings blazed fitfully for days and nights thereafter.

But what had become of the tall weathered structures? The farm as we approached seemed strangely shrunken and impotent. No huge gray splash merged with the dappled white and green of the hillside. Instead there was a gap dotted with a yellowish spot—the unpainted wood of a small building not yet mellowed.

The homestead itself seemed smaller, and when we were close enough for details I saw that the ell at the north side had been allowed to sink in ruins, while the main part of the dwelling was in a condition of neglect made more emphatic by a patch here and there unskilfully put on.

The season's first crop of weeds thrust rank tops above the grass in the

dooryard. Only the orchards in bloom softened the appearance of poverty and desolation. To right and left they spread their delicate white and pink, up the hillside behind the house, and across the road in the meadow toward the river.

Most of the old farmers scorned fruit, planting unhappy little groups of trees, or a few odd apple shots for cider, but Uncle Jesse had practised its culture in quantity if not skilfully, as a part of his general scheme of magnificence. His taste was coarse as the time's knowledge of varieties was slight, but he liked the idea of exuberant production. Though he had plenty of tasty apples for the winter evenings, and barrels of the deadly juice in the cellar, he specialized in pears, and so in the neglected files of trees, twisted, half starved, and broken, about to bear a fraction of their former yield, the white blossoms predominated.

Across the road were pears and plums, and directly behind the house the drift was solid white. There where the Seckels and Bartletts grew, two women of Jesse's house had met their lovers who circled over the hill and came down secretly because of the old man's temper, and the lover who came in blossom-time had remained.

My brother, at a nudge, stopped the car before a gate which lolled from one hinge in the rotting fence post. A mongrel dog came yapping out, and from a clump of bush behind the pickets a shock-haired child raised suddenly an idiot's face and formless screech.

In response to the clamour a woman personifying negation at thirty appeared at an open window. The idiot ran to her and pawed the low sill without gaining her attention.

"Where is Mr. Stives?" I called. "Doesn't he live here now?"

"He don't live here no more, he's down to Plattery."

"Who does live here?"

"Me and Mr. Hake—my husband."

"How long ago did the barns burn?"

"Two years ago. Say, if you want to ask so many questions, you better go somewheres else."

She vanished, leaving the child to its senseless whine.

We drove on slowly, and near the small new barn, which was little more than a shed of slabs, came upon Mr. Hake, an old young man, with an expression more patient than that of the usual victim of consumption.

He was willing to talk. The buildings, he said, had gone up in the night. Maybe the fire was an accident, maybe it was set—he wouldn't want to guess. They were a total loss, the insurance had run out. The old man had been taken to Plattery soon afterward. He was failing fast, and was hard to take care of in such a lonely spot. Abbie, his daughter, came and got him, and found a housekeeper to nurse him. She couldn't keep him herself because she had no help. Maybe the truth was that an old person like that was a trouble in the house. The two sons paid the bills, he understood.

"But where was his own money?" I asked. "He was supposed to be well off."

"He wasn't near so well fixed as folks thought," replied the consumptive, with a visible brightening. "When Sam and Bim looked him up at the bank they found there wasn't much left. They told him pretty quick what to do, I guess, and I hired the farm reasonable."

"What became of the money? Do they know?"

"Oh, the old feller never did do much for quite a long time. That shootin' that they called a accident kind of took the starch out of him. The farm wasn't what you'd call rightly worked for ten years. I guess the money just petered out."

It seemed the right verb to apply to the possessor as well as to the thing possessed. Uncle Jesse had petered out. A Samson shorn of strength, he lingered on in the twilight, doubtless longing many a time, before all his manhood went, for a roof heavy

enough to crush him. His Pilgrim Jaaveh had denied him that privilege.

"That is a horrible thing, to keep on existing after one has died," I said, echoing my brother's earlier thought. "What is life if poignancy has gone? Better fifty years, and so forth, as the good Tennyson wrote for our Victorian friends."

"Drat all poetry!" said my bitter brother.

"Just for that," I said, "I will place in a proper form before you Uncle Jesse's story, which has in it much poetry and a grim and fitting climax, despite the thin latter end which you have seen. No man shall sneer at poetry to me among these hills, and escape unscathed while I am active."

CHAPTER III

Jesse Stives, fourth child of a small farmer and a woman so committed to work and childbearing that she seemed never to have had a youth, was born under the shadow of the Pilgrim dogma. His father had undergone at thirty one of the volcanic conversions common in a society where sectarian beliefs were vitally important and sharply defined, and the chill of salvation by punishment wrapped the household with the relentlessness of a January night.

All of the children except Jesse died at birth or after short and puny struggles. There seemed to be against their production for the farm's bleak drudgery a protest of Nature, combated strongly by the father, whose desire for offspring was of orthodox persistence.

Material for a tragedy existed; one imagines that more than once the bony hand of the wife moved hypnotically toward a cleaver, when Reuel Stives leaned over the tin wash basin in the sink, with the back of his lean corded neck exposed. If her brain was not atrophied by exhaustion, she must have had ironic thoughts when she heard him pray at the full stretch of his lungs, instructing and beseeching by turns, in a very ecstasy of torment. Undoubtedly her light-gray eyes held at times a concentration of the icy, appraising glint, accompanied by a curl of thin lips, of the New England women looking at their men—Aunt Emmeline's look, a generation later, for Jesse; the look, in still moments, of many middle-aged helpmeets beyond the confines of New England. But she had neither education nor initiative to make good a revolt; and her mother, the crone puffing with innocent senile comfort at a clay pipe in the hearth corner, could give her no other counsel than endurance.

The fourth child survived by strength—an atavism, perhaps. He saw subsequent babies carried out as they appeared, but this never inspired doubt about his own continuance of life. Later gossip, when his feats were bragged of through the countryside, endowed him with unnatural strength at birth. Whatever his beginning, he soon became, in the language of the country, a more than stugged youngster.

For such a boy the life was bearable, but Jesse was too vital to remain on the farm indefinitely. It was his father's cruelty that actually drove him out. The religious mania found customary outlet in beatings intended to chasten an unruly spirit. The parent suffered like a flagellant, going into executive session with his Tyrant after every employment of the strap, but his self-torture did not help the beaten boy.

The only moral feeling inculcated was hatred of a God who could countenance such a system, and the mental picture was akin: a huge old man with a broad gray beard, wearing a purple cloak and condemning to hell-fire, after much talk of mercy, slaves who had no chance to escape. Crude instruction administered intermittently at the district school was in line with this visualization, and the interminable sermons and long passionately-shouted hymns at the meeting-house were heavy with the strange morbid terror of a solemn people reassuring Deity with the right hand and lifting up the left to ward off a blow.

He left home on his seventeenth birthday. His mother had died of the ninth delivery, and his father was marked for madness. He was already a giant, and though undeveloped, with every limb and member awkwardly at war with the other, was quite capable of holding his own.

Working his way to the shore, and along it to New London, he shipped on a coastwise trading schooner, more by chance than for any reason except hunger.

If he had drifted into the West Indian trade he might have met and fastened upon an opportunity to make money; but he shipped next on a New Bedford whaler, and spent the best years of his youth on the open seas.

When he went to sea he was as nearly an atheist as was possible for a New Englander upon whom the impression of a personal Deity had been stamped almost ineradicably. Education might conceivably have developed his denial into some form of milder agnosticism, but contact with the elemental ocean flung him to Poseidon, who was but Jaaveh with a trident instead of the purple cloak.

He hated the sea, fought it, and loved it in the true Puritan fashion of embracing a pet detestation. Something of the spirit of its immensity entered his soul as the gray billows with their sinister white crests swept by day after day. He was neither chastened by the rhythm nor inspired by the beauty, but volume and power were sib to the crude love of bigness in him—the bigness reacted to and craved by his development under the work of trimming sails and trying out blubber. He answered the urge of his spirit, glorying sombrely in battle with storms and men alike.

Both man and sea accommodated him. He stood by the bucko mate of the *Melissa Wright* when one of the bloodiest mutinies in New Bedford history occurred; came through to victory a mass of cuts and bruises; and nearly killed the mate in port at the end of the voyage in a rum-row over a woman.

When he was third mate on the *Repentance and Hope*, a mulatto boatsteerer drove a knife between his ribs and gave him two months in his bunk, that would have been eternity in deep-sea currents for a seaman of common build.

A year later an old bull whale, that had been harpooned before, sounded at the stroke of the steel, rose beneath his boat, and crushed it and two men like china cups. He was rescued from that flurry with a broken leg.

The *Golden Eagle* went aground off Provincetown in November of 'sixty-three, and Manoel Silveira, a half-bred braggart Portuguese of uncanny skill on the water, ran out a shifty sloop from behind his island and took Jesse and two other three-quarters frozen survivors from the rigging. The exposure was too much, temporarily, for even the giant's endurance. For many weeks he could scarcely hobble, and when at last he was driven to work, he went on a lumber schooner southward bound.

The Army caught him in Virginia. He knew little about the War and cared less. Bitter convictions anent Abolition and States' Rights, which would have been his natural New England portion on land, had failed to grip him at sea, and none of his ships had met a Southern privateer. During his rare periods on shore, he had been either crippled by injuries or savage and sodden with drink and passion for women. Patriotism was a name to him, and the negro merely a useful hand, in some of his island phases, on a vessel.

Nevertheless when drafted he stood up well, in accordance with his nature. War's brutality could not shock him after a decade on whalers, and military carousing was but a continuation of shore-leave excess, the natural sweating-out of men engaged in savage business. His strength came back to him, and he fought through the Wilderness with Grant's veterans, up to the slaughter of Cold Harbour, where a rifle bullet smashed two of his fingers and lodged in his hip, and he lay on the field through the night, screaming in delirium for water.

The rigours of an army hospital nearly brought on the end which a lucky discovery by searchers had averted. He crawled forth at Appomattox-time, a hulk like that of a beached boat drawn for repairs from long half-burial in the sand.

He had no vigour for the sea, and a long-delayed nostalgia beckoned him toward Franklin-Pierce. He followed it instinctively, making the trip slowly by easy stages, and testing his weakness in advance as an old man taps fumblingly with a cane. His bones were putty until the scent of a late spring reached his nostrils from the hills, indescribably fragrant with the reawakening of that northern country to the sun.

He knew for the first time, then, that he was of New England. He had seldom remembered his birthplace without bitterness, and never would think of it sentimentally; but his fierce mind, a little tempered for the time by suffering, admitted pleasure from the harsh environment so magically painted by the spring—the pastures quick with delicate new green, the sky above the fringe of larch and spruce so vivid. Perhaps his love for fruit trees dated from instinctive joy that came to his weak lungs on the breath of the sweet ragged orchards; for the late season made it blossom-time as he crept up the winding road from Plattery.

His father was dead, unmourned, and there was not even the pretence of a home to which he could return. He had but one relative on whose good-will he could count, a half-brother of his mother's mother, an ancient, Medad Shanks by name, dwelling with his aged wife at Heifer Hill Farm. Jesse reached their well-curb exhausted, and was taken in with the flustered scurrying of a kind old couple startled by a wild adventure.

CHAPTER IV

It was not long before he could milk two cows and guide an antiquated horse. With mockery of his own weakness, he ambled about the farm on odd tasks, and then put in and cultivated a field of late corn. Medad's only son had gone West long before, and disappeared in the gold-rush; the old man himself was feeble; and the fields had grown up to weeds. To restore a little of the land's prosperity was not only profitable to the health but business for the mind. The ability to rest—to lie in the sun and absorb life—was not in Jesse. The work-demon of northern blood drove him to labour.

Returning energy urged him equally into trouble. Franklin-Pierce was then a thriving community for a farming one, and life was beginning to flow more rapidly after the War. The advent of a young man of Jesse's thews could not take place unnoticed by the tall sanguine girls of village and farmstead. His was a quick eye at pigeon shooting, and once on his feet with his wounds fairly healed, he could throw any man in the two townships at collar-and-elbow or catch-as-catch-can. Skill gained from his rough experience counted heavily, but sheer size was the deciding factor.

In the autumn he was his old self, with a slight permanent limp, but solid and mountainous. When the chain slipped from a stone which a yoke of oxen was trying to pull from a hole, he sprang into the hole and heaved out the stone with his hands. Rustic femininity could not resist such deeds as that.

He had his way with many, and was no more troubled by moral qualms than he had been when, as a sailor, he went through a port on a drunken spree. But there was one girl who laughed at him instead of yielding—called him the Grizzly Bear—and naturally she was the one whom he desired.

She was Emmeline Quickett, a Yankee country peony; full-blown, of twenty-six. Her lover had been killed at Antietam, and though she was of a temperament receptive to another, her decision had been made about the manner of the wooing. Unconsciously imitating a daintier beauty of the period, she said that the way to her arms lay

past the pulpit. From this position she could not be drawn, either by cozening or by the hug of the bear.

Old Medad Shanks, tottering forward shrewdly, became the god from the machine. He offered to bequeath Heifer Hill Farm to Jesse, subject only to a reversion if his son should return, provided that Jesse and Emmeline, marrying, should care for him and his wife until their deaths. Thus with a few strokes of the quill he could acquire comfort for extreme old age, and bestow happiness upon two young persons.

The courted damsel, savouring her advantage, proved maddeningly coy. By turns she allowed herself spasms of melancholy anent the dead soldier, and flaunted her bold red-and-black beauty before other appreciative eyes. Jesse's prowess was in no danger of softening from disuse; she got him into broils with twenty families. At last, however, she gave way to his desire and her own, and married him in a culminating crash of hysteria, suitable to a bride won with difficulty.

It was her last effective explosion; the iron and leather of the man's temperament beat her. She learned to know perfectly his mechanism—the effect on him of any specific push; but to the principle that controlled the thing she could not get a key. Though her guess that he never forgave her for her early resistance was shrewd, it was not the whole story. In him, as in every thoroughly characteristic male descendant of the Puritans, there was lacking the eternal youth that keeps sweetness in the lover.

Children came fast: six sons and a daughter. Medad followed George, and Franklin, Medad; and then appeared the twins, Epaphroditus and Abimelech, and after them Samuel and Abigail. Benjamin was the last, with a gap between—a son of Sarah, for his mother was beyond the common age of women who bear children.

The name of Medad was a sop to continued fortune. The subsequent biblical outburst in nomenclature coincided with the beginning of Jesse's fight against his father's dogma, which came to settle on his shoulders.

Red-eyed for vengeance, belief in the God of Punishment emerged like substance from shadow, out of the wintry woodland beyond Heifer Hill and from memories of the storm-wrapt ocean, into the consciousness of the "warm" farmer in his prosperous days.

The obsession grew gradually and could not break the mind, since Jesse's mind was not geared to madness. It was an Old Testament obsession, not unlike King David's. After David sinned, he suffered from remorse. In like manner Jesse Stives sinned and suffered blackly. Marriage, grown thin, was no deterrent to the fire that surged through him, and success made him more arrogant. He broke the jaw, and almost the neck, of a hireling oaf who hesitated to obey an order; and it was notorious that the child of a cousin of his wife, supported by him and contemptuously tolerated by Aunt Emmeline, was his own daughter.

His upheavals of repentance for such deeds may have brought on his wife's scorn, as King David's prancing earned Michal's. She might have retained admiration for his strength if he had not weakened intermittently under the weight of the black hound of superstition on his shoulders.

CHAPTER V

THE establishment had for me a kind of magnificence in the days when the boys were growing up. There was a rough rustic glamour—a spirit as of ale and the quips of that honest-hearted fellow Wamba the Jester, in Cedric the Saxon's home in "Ivanhoe." No doubt I was somewhat misled by the good-nature with which I was treated as a small guest for whom, as I afterward learned, board had been liberally paid; but there was a percentage of real generosity in the family's feeling toward children, and the place had much more validly the atmosphere of the yeoman-noble's than the farms of to-day.

It was virtually self-supporting, in the production and conversion of the essentials of life, on the spot. Not only were grain and vegetables grown; animals were slaughtered and the quarters smoked, and in innumerable minor matters—the making of candles, and feather beds, and clothing—the household activities extended almost mediævally. The hearth with its crane had given way to a stove, but other conveniences were few. Civilization had scarcely entered the stage of forks; the hireling cleaned up his plate in workmanlike manner with a steel knife and a nubbin of bread, and other daily tricks had the same genial frankness.

Ben was the only child younger than I. The ages of the older boys and Abbie ranged from thirteen to half a dozen years beyond mine. They formed a raw-boned and active crew, managed with accuracy by their grim mother, and scrambling for cover when gloom sat upon their father's back.

Aunt Emmeline seemed to have no favourite; a coarse-fibred woman of harsh lines for whom early illusions had departed and the later ones had not appeared, she dealt out justice to all according to her light. Jesse's partiality, on the other hand, was so marked that it had been accepted as final, arousing little bitterness and scarcely a comment. He was proud of Abbie, with the bubble vanity of a man who has begotten a handsome daughter, but the little Ben was above any comparison, a different element.

The boy had silver hair, not weak like an albino's, but like the vigorous mane of an extraordinarily hale old man. His features were unaccountably Greek, and he had well-shaped hands and feet, and an athlete's form and poise. Miraculously, Jaaveh's cloud had passed him by. He had his moods, but none of them was ugly with New England's morbid melancholy. Fear was not in him; least of all, for his father.

It was an amazing thing to see the giant's manner alter when the child with shining hair flung himself on him. Bennie's freedom from the ancestral gloom seemed to raise it from him also, temporarily. They were more like a young grandfather and a grandchild, than like father and son.

Prosperity occupied Franklin-Pierce and Websterden for a generation, then moved southward and cityward in the natural course. The opportunities of business called the sons and daughters to the coast; in a single year more than a hundred went from Franklin-Pierce.

Among them were the Stives twins, Paph and Bin. George had gone earlier, and Medad, a wild driver, had been thrown and dragged to death by a crazed Hambletonian mare. Only Sam, Abigail and Ben were left; and Sam did not stay long after Aunt Emmeline's death from cancer. It was time, he argued not unreasonably, for him to do something for himself. If Robbie was to have the farm, there was no advantage in his staying.

Prior to his exit, Abigail and her father had come to a break. The girl was attracted by a red-haired horseman, a former crony of her brother Medad. He was a loafer living on his mother's income, and the attraction would have been short-lived if Jesse had not burst into a rage. He forbade the house to Merril Peet, and threatened murder when he learned of secret meetings.

The threat came perilously close to fulfilment. The two men met on the church steps, and in reply to Peet's sneer Jesse felled him with a whip-end, like a bullock on a barn floor.

Logically her father's daughter, Abbie only awaited her mother's death before leaving. Peet married her with an eye to her inheritance, believing that the old man would call her back. Instead, Jesse cursed her from the doorstep, and never spoke or willingly heard her name again, until a greater tragedy had broken him.

Drowsing and waking through the long country night on my semi-occasional visits after the departure, I used to hear him, ridden by his hound of remorse, pace the uneven floor on the other side of the partition. He kept at it steadily, four paces east and four back, for from three to four hours of

the night's heart, so that one became accustomed to him as to a clock beside the ear.

At dawn he called Ben and went out, bellowing grimly at the hirelings as he passed their quarters over the shed. Moving down the boarded path toward the barns with slightly limping, brobdignagian strides, he stooped a little, so that his enormous hands, like kegs, swung below mid-thigh. The yeast was working in him. He had seen a son's body brought in, and his wife's lingering death-in-life, without emotion too deep to be worked off through spiritual hysteria; but his daughter's desertion drove him to silence. He went to church no more. The swing of the whip that stunned Merrill Peet had come at tide-turn, and his neighbours, weary of his violence and sensing with hyena-noses the beginning of his weakness, shifted from fawning to a general snarl which, while it moved the giant to bass laughter, made him hate contact with them.

Weakened, he was still Samson; and he had the land, and his youngest. His plan was to show the unfilial elder offspring the folly of deserting the soil for the city, by establishing Bennie impregnably on the best farm in the district. To that end he worked early and late with the perverse New England energy, pushing the crude corn-and-potatoes alternation to squeeze the last bushels that the fields could be made to yield under it.

The very obstinacy which supported him conspired to prevent him from seeing the ironical future's most obvious trap.

Despite bitter experience he had not learned the unwisdom of trying to override the essentials of character. He was blind to Bennie's inability to see money as a goal, and his peculiar love, irretrievably selfish at the core, carried his insight no farther than the boy's willingness, obedience and apparent happiness. His youngest son was the one person from whom he never looked for opposition.

Thus Bennie grew up as though in the calm of a ship's lee in a storm. Or he was a young man walking in a dream along a forest-aisle, clad in green, looking up at the sky and whistling a pleasant air. He had no more warning than his father of an impending clash. Neither a prig nor a fool, he went lightly without self-consciousness, one of the fortunate unfortunates who arrive, beloved of the Elder Gods, at the beginning or end of a generation, and are sacrificed between it and the last or next.

He was not discontented; he turned instinctively from intimacy with people who seemed to him stupid, and loved the farm for the beauty of its hills rather than for the return from its fields. His body was still gaining, while his mind took its time in arriving at conclusions in the peace of that upland space.

The ugliness of the human element around him scarcely touched him. He kept through adolescence much of the Greek charm of his childhood. A mondaine of thirty would have seen him as the young Agathocles, turned blond, descending from the painting on an amphora, and would have longed to pass her long predatory fingers through the silver hair.

CHAPTER VI

THE next blow was struck from the past. A lawyer's letter, as detached from probability as a meteorite, informed Jesse that a grandson of old Medad Shanks had made known his existence and would claim the farm under the reversion clause in his grandfather's will. He was a son of the adventurer who had gone West to hunt for gold before the War. There would be no difficulty, the lawyer stated, in establishing his claim.

Jesse was too completely taken by surprise to rise to one of his rages. The event was preposterous. Orville Shanks, he was sure, had never had a son; or if he had, with what foolishness did anyone seek to disturb an inheritance settled for nearly thirty years? He

neither acknowledged the letters nor troubled himself to notify Bennie, who was taking a short-term course at the State agricultural college.

Soon, however, he was forced to give the matter attention. So fantastic was the contention from a common-sense viewpoint, and so obscure were some of the technical points involved, that a court would scarcely have entertained the case seriously if the defendant could have contained his wrath at the preliminary hearing.

But no wisdom could impress the worth of tact on Jesse. His anger had had plenty of time for kindling, and he lit the courtroom with its blaze, to the delight of as many of his enemies as had taken the trouble to attend. The court threatened him with punishment for contempt, and withheld it only in consideration of the circumstances.

The case dragged along maddeningly, with the usual delays and abrupt reversals. Once the plaintiff—obviously a tool of lawyers—was all but thrown out of court. Again, the execution of a writ of dispossession upon Jesse was barely averted. All the devices of a loose legal system were employed by counsel on both sides. The gradually bewildering effect on the giant was lamentable, and Bennie, tightening into manhood under the strain, managed to keep him within bounds with difficulty.

At last a strange and not unpleasing manifestation of sheer desperate force brought down the whole fallacious structure. Jesse announced that he would shoot the man who took his home from him. An absurd yet potent figure of defiance, he sat day and night by the window with his gun across his knees. When he drove behind the pair of weedy stallions, running to harness, which had succeeded the Hambletonian trotters in his barn, his waggon was an arsenal.

Bennie protested, the denizens laughed or raged, and the Law threatened, but he won his point. The Shanks's heir, genuine or otherwise, gave definite decision that he was through with the whole affair. He valued his life too much to risk it against so stubborn a maniac, for the sake of the lawyers' leavings of the proceeds from a hill farm.

The old man seized his victory with zest. Too bitter and scornful to talk about it, he ran the stallions ragged in flaunting advertisement of his freedom. Because he had been successful, there was an element of barbaric grandeur in the spectacle of the great bulk, delivered from its enemies, sweeping by behind the pounding little horses, its beard spread fan-like by the wind of the passage. Once more, and after its time, the New England ego, as aggressive as an octopus, had made good its fanatical self-assertion. The joy of winning held back temporarily the progress of decay.

Settlement of bills incurred in defence of the suit required several trips to Plattery, and his pride savoured them heartily. In the shore town he was the day's celebrity, at whom the populace laughed behind its hand, but with a half-secret admiration. He saw the glances out of the tail of his eye, and enjoyed sardonically the tone of the comment.

One evening the stallions, scrambling with slipping hoofs on the wet asphalt at Blind Man's Corner, swung the waggon against a telegraph pole and broke an axle. The blacksmith had not returned from an afternoon drinking-trip to Ware, and no one cared to risk a vehicle with Jesse on the rutted roads of a rainy November night. He put up the horses at the hotel stable, and registered his name below those of the hardware drummer and the postal inspector.

The heat of the stuffy office choked him, and he sallied out on rain-swept Main Street. Down by the bridge the town hall showed an open doorway and lighted windows above it. Posters in the entrance advertised a theatrical performance. Driven by the rain and a random impulse, he went in.

He had not seen a play for twenty years—had scarcely entered a theatre since the early burlesque days, when perspiring pink Amazons entered by the pair, and parting smartly, ambled to the front with the historic pseudo-military

strut. So modest an illusion as that produced by the town hall's oil footlights confused him a little, and he stood at the rear of the room through half an act, struggling with the new impressions.

The company was the casual little group of barnstormers, the play a thin piece of claptrap hacked from an old melodrama to suit the limitations of stage and cast. The comedian was also the manager and play-tailor; the leading man, once an actor, strove to conceal the ravages of fifty hectic years, and supported with a success bred by practice the accumulated nervous strain of a week-old carouse. A hag played The Duchess according to the democratic tradition. Of the two younger women, one was a blonde of immemorial type; good-humoured if not harried, genial when fed, well-known since ancient Assyria for her story of betrayal by the son of a merchant prince. Old Jesse's crude native shrewdness rejected play and people flatly for lack of genuineness.

The other actress was of a different breed, and in the intermission he moved down to a vacant chair in front, to watch her. He had seen nothing more than a tall girl with black hair and dark eyes, but her throaty voice and the grace of her long motions fascinated him. He had the fanatic's ageless interest, sensuous as religious hysteria itself, in a handsome woman.

The curtain rose a few feet, stopped, fell with a thump then, after some hidden commotion, was conquered and raised. Jesse sat staring at the dark-haired girl. Before the second act ended, the strength with which he had outfought his generation began to mock him by giving him a young man's desire.

He considered the young actress carefully. Women had always been cattle to him, and he could not understand exactly the quality of this girl's appeal.

She looked sick beneath her paint; her beauty, seen at closer range, seemed dull, as though a film were over it. He detested sick women as he did sick cows, but the mystery of sex prevented him from dismissing this one. He was in fact facing for the first time a charm less crude than that of the field wench or the port siren—the arbitrary charm, defying analysis, of a woman born to arouse passion insidiously, and often without volition, by some soft trivial mannerism, an apparently unimportant contrast or blending of colours.

The concentration of his gaze attracted the watchful blonde's attention. Under cover of the comedian's antics she spoke to the other, and they both stared. Jesse caught the look, and the dark girl's weary contempt, expressed in a smile that was merely a twist of the short upper lip.

At the uneven fall of the final curtain, he roused himself from a daze, and pushed out between the covertly staring groups. Tramping back through the rain to the hotel, he divided the night between twisting on the hair mattress to which his great body was unaccustomed, and his old trick of pacing the floor.

A little after midnight he heard voices and the slamming of doors, and distinguished the voodoo-word "doctor" several times repeated, with the usual oily emphasis but his room was in the el of the building, the calls subsided quickly, and his thoughts banished his curiosity.

In the morning he had the waggon repaired, and drove in clear biting weather over the frozen ruts to Franklin-Pierce. He said nothing to Ben about his trip, and the young man, brought up among the secretive New England moods, noticed nothing unusual. But the shrivelled crone, once his chattel, who kept house for them, suspected his trend with a last withered vestige of intuitive jealousy, and cackled hints until he rasped a word at her that set her to dropping dishes.

He roamed the farm for three days, and paced his room for the larger part of their nights, juggling, fanatic-fashion, to bring his desire and the will of his God into line. At last the legerdemain was accomplished, and on the fourth morning he harnessed the little stallions and set forth for Plattery without a

word, his broad flag of beard spreading fantastically in the bitter wind.

There was no hesitation after his arrival. He hitched the team by the post office, and questioned D. Y. Endicott, the postmaster, without preamble.

"I want to know where that gal is, the actress, that was here Saturday night."

Endicott, a feeble contemporary, whose thoughts of women had become mere regretful wraiths, stared at him agog.

"Don't stand there gawping at me!" the giant said. "Tell me where she is, if you know."

"Why, she's over to the hotel," said the startled pensioner. "She took sick that same night"—he winked suggestively. "You might have heard 'em bring her in if you'd have listened. The others had to go on without her. I guess she was pretty bad off. I guess you could see her now if you went over there—if you're so anxious."

Jesse left him to sow gossip, and stormed the Plattery House.

CHAPTER VII

Mrs. Ed. Furnival, worthy mistress of the hostelry, averred after the event that by five o'clock that evening she could have been knocked down with a feather. Between Old Man Stives' advent and that time, there had occurred an introduction, a courtship, a proposal of marriage, the acceptance thereof, and the marriage itself, with the obliging aid of the Reverend Monks, and her own and Debbie's assistance as witnesses.

"And not so odd at that, neither," Mrs. Furnival was accustomed to conclude her recital, "when you come to remember that Jesse Stives was always loony, and the girl was a actress and part Portagee. You can't tell what them spigotties will do, I never could abide 'em."

Thus the combination of local and provincial prejudices.

Mary Sileira was a granddaughter of that Manoel who had rescued Jesse from the stranded whaler *Golden Eagle*, off the Massachusetts coast in '63.

Grass-orphaned early, she had been brought up by her grandfather and his second wife, a one-legged woman, on the Mare-and-Foal, where Manoel was light-keeper. The island household had a coastwise notoriety, due to the impressionistic personalities of the couple, who were continually in trouble through causes ranging from the old man's raw boastfulness to the woman's loss of her artificial leg. Amusingly sinister characters, who might have stepped out of the pages of "Treasure Island"—Portland Joe, the ex-undertaker, and Captain Minot Hale, unpunished murderer of three Cape Verde Islanders—frequented the place, giving rise to rumours of smuggling in the naïve minds of summer visitors on the mainland.

The picturesque tradition brought trade in fish and lobsters, and among the transients was an occasional blackbird, subject to the snare of Mary's developing beauty. The old Portuguese and his wife capitalized the attraction shamelessly, but watched its holder like pawnbrokers. No Lothario had real success until after Manoel's mysterious death, which missed the note of tragedy because of the victim's opera-bouffe character.

The one-legged harridan left the Mare-and-Foal to run a sailors' boarding house in New London, and Mary yielded to the persuasion of a marine insurance agent named Felts, who thought he saw a chance to exploit her. His glamour for her folded like a mist when she discovered that he was already married, and she told him, in one of those grim tête-à-tête encounters which are like grave-openings, that she was through.

"What will you do, you fool?" he sneered at her. "You haven't any money, and it's a cinch I'm not giving you any."

"I'll do what you've taught me," she answered. "Do you think you're the only beast in the world? I can find a richer one than you, and I'll do with

him what I ought to have done with you —keep him where he belongs."

Accomplishment was not so easy. Opportunities were limited, her life in the full air of the island had given her a hatred for disorder and crowding, and her character revolted from forced intimacy. After several unhappy experiments, she met and followed Peter Querriton, a struggling manager of cheap travelling companies, who had at least the merit of frankness.

"Be good to me, and I'll teach you what I can," he told her. "I'm a lonely little guy—my wife hates me, the way women get to hate a man for being alive at all, and I hate her. I wish I could settle down somewhere, and have a home, and pigs and chickens and children, and forget I ever saw a stage; but she won't divorce me, and I couldn't anyway. Acting is all I know, I couldn't keep away from it. Maybe I'll have a stroke of luck some day. I've got a comedy. Anyway, you may as well take a chance with me until something better turns up."

That was the difficulty—they were always waiting for something to turn up. Querriton was the opportunist, sunk in a well on a blue morning, up in the seventh heaven over a fair house at night.

Life with him, inevitably tawdry in many of its details, gave neither the satisfaction of a definite plan toward success nor the thrill of love returned. He was, as he had said, a lonely little guy, fighting in a spasmodic way a battle always slightly too hard for him. He was affectionate, like a good-natured mongrel, and had a knack for play-carving and slapstick comedy, but Failure was his dreary playfellow, reappearing with a sheepish grin just when an escape seemed to have been made.

The pleasantest association of days which grew more and more uncertain was with Blondie Harkness, who joined the company in order (so she said) to forget that she was an actress.

Under the stark unscrupulousness which was her practical philosophy, Blondie had at core a sense of fair play sharpened by a snapping wit. She disliked cruelty and weakness, and would not betray a friend except to save herself.

A genuine friendship of the strange shifting female sort developed between her and Mary. They made common cause against John Lefferts, the drunken lead, and old Mrs. Keeney, who played dowagers and duennas and bewailed the aggressions of an unjust fate in the intervals between cocaine sprees. Thinking, and speaking to each other, from the cynical viewpoint of females, they saw their lives in a way impossible for men to understand. They felt, without debt, the vague depression of events unsoftened by illusion, seized temporary pleasure and endured unhappiness as casually as a cigarette was lit or a light turned out.

Blondie laid twenty-five dollars on the stained bureau-top in the Plattery House bedroom when she was forced to leave on the Monday morning following her friend's collapse.

"It's all I have, dearie, and I'm not holding out much hope for the future. My intentions are good, but the flesh is weak. I know myself, so what's the use of making fool promises? I only hope Pete comes across. Gawd knows he ought to, he got you into it. But men aren't much on facing the music. When they've had their fun they're through, you can't change 'em. And Pete's in an awful hole with that loan—Dubois, the peanut, is hollering for his money. I hate to spread gloom, but I wouldn't count too much on him if I were you. It's just hard luck."

"It's not his fault," said Mary drearily, "it's mine. I ought to have known enough to be careful—me, with the experience I have. The only thing I've got to be thankful for is that it happened when it did. I ask you, what would I have done with a family? Kiss me, Blondie, and take care of yourself. Maybe something will turn up, like Pete says."

So it was Blondie to whom she wrote after the visit of old Jesse Stives and its wild developments. The letter was

scrawled in pencil on sheets of the hotel pad-paper, without much coherence, but expressed fairly the writer's state of mind. The details of the marriage were set forth baldly, then Mary wrote, as she felt:

"As near as I can make out, the old man has got himself to thank that his God has sent him to rescue me from a sinful life. Of course that's not the real answer, but he has the bug that it is. This God of his is the regular old style terror. He ordered my grandfather to pull my old bridegroom out of the drink years ago, and now is the time to pay the bill. Do you get the idea? Well, I guess I can stand it. They say he has a bankroll and has fought with all his sons but one, and I guess I can manage that one, and I'll give the old man a square deal as long as it lasts, and hope to get out of it if I live. You ought to see the old bird, Blondie, he is made up for the King of the Hills. I think he has had the same beard for a thousand years. His place is away up at the back of nowhere, but anyway I won't die from loneliness, not after fifteen years on that island. So it's me for the simple life for a while; don't forget to let me know where you are.

"MARY.

"P.S.—I forgot to say that my old darling is a sport. He has horses. He says running horses have made records and trotters have made records, but there are no records of horses running in double harness to a waggon making records, and he is the pioneer. Can you beat it?"

CHAPTER VIII

ON the next Monday the stallions drew the fantastically mated pair to Franklin-Pierce, and the trip marked the beginning of the period in Mary's life which seemed to her, looking back upon it after time had dulled its poignancy, as if it had been a section from another's.

She was conscious of a sense of unreality when they left Plattery behind, and mounted past the broken country to the bleak gray hills. The clear weather had ended; a high wind blew steadily, forcing down the horses' heads, and to northward the sky was closing in for snow.

She was familiar with the savage storms of the sea, which clutched and shook the coast, and let it go, battered; but the relentless enmity that seemed to rise from the land itself—the very breath of iron winter—she had not known. It gripped her like a giant hand, of which the old man beside her was the thumb and finger.

For the first time she saw him as more ominous than ridiculous. With the departure from the town he had returned into his own element, acquiring dignity as his surroundings fitted him. His bulk and silence were merciless, like the landscape of barren slopes and bare trees swept by the insane wind.

She tried to talk to him, but he had no conversation for the time. His mind was coiled about the accomplishment of his desire, in which the command of his religious obsession was involved. Though he could wait, his purpose was closed, and there was nothing to be said about it. He was as certain of his righteousness, and as devoid of pleasant small talk, as the Pilgrim pillars whom one sees in the mind's pictures, gravely instructing their women in the observance of duty, from the pulpit-attitude. He had stated his dictum, and no doubts oppressed him.

Desperate, she commenced to hum an air, and at last to sing.

Her singing voice had the throaty quality which in her speech had caught the old man's attention in the play. It moved him, and roughly breaking in on the song, he demanded:

"What's that you're singing? It ain't English, is it?"

"Portuguese," she answered. "My mother was straight Portuguese from

Setubal, but I get the white skin from my father's mother, old Manoel's first wife. She was English."

She looked at him with the curiosity of her sex, and sang:

"Eu ten'no cinco namoros,
Tres de man'na, dois de tarde;
A todos elles eu minto,
So a ti fallo a verdade."

"What does it mean?" he demanded.

"'I have five lovers, three for the morning, two for afternoon. I lie to all of them, and speak truth only to you.'"

Jesse stung the stallions with a savage blow.

"Don't let me hear no more stuff like that. That's no song for my house."

"I'll sing what I please," she said, furious. "And don't you strike your horses like that. I don't like it."

He stopped the waggon by hauling the horses back upon their haunches. Possession of the girl gave him temporarily the strength of his youth.

"Listen, my gal. No woman (he pronounced it woo-man) has ever licked me, and none is going to begin now. You do as I say. You hear?"

"I'll leave you!"

He pointed with the whip, down the inhospitable road toward Plattery.

"The road's open. How far will you get, the way you are?"

She met his eyes squarely for a moment, in a silence broken only by the panting of the horses. She shuddered.

"Drive on."

There was no more singing on the way. They drove mile after mile without words, rising higher through the wind that grew colder, until, benumbed, they reached Heifer Hill.

Jesse turned into the barnyard, got out, stamped his feet, and lifted his wife down. She could scarcely stand.

"Go into the house and wait for me," he said. "I'll come as soon as I unhitch. If you want anything, tell the woman. You needn't do no work to speak of, long's you behave yourself."

She walked unsteadily toward the dwelling, past the woodshed piled with cut lengths, and a native as sympathetic in appearance, who emerged from it. A board path led her into the dooryard, and to the kitchen door beneath a dry grape-vine. As she stood there she felt crushed between house and looming hill.

The door opened before she could knock. A tall young man, silver-haired, stood on the threshold.

"Who—who are you?" she gasped stupidly.

"Ben Stives. Who on earth are you?"

She stared at him, tried to speak, then began to laugh, leaning against the door-jamb. At last she managed to articulate:

"I'm your new mother." Then, just before she pitched forward: "You look human. For God's sake take care of me."

He caught her in his arms, carried her upstairs, and called the crone. When Jesse came in she was still in a stupor.

She did not get up for three days. The crone took care of her without tenderness, and she saw her husband only twice, for a moment or two.

By the time she was able to crawl downstairs, a dull feeling of inevitability had enveloped her.

The house was quiet as a morgue, and seemed isolated from all the world by the snow which, falling steadily, wrapped a shroud around it.

She found her way to the kitchen, and sat weakly by the stove. The crone was peeling onions in the sink-room, with a sulphur match held between her toothless gums to prevent her eyes from watering. The Seth Thomas clock above the mantelshelf ticked loudly, a half-grown kitten stretched itself in the stove's heat. The kettle-cover made a faint rattle as the water boiled.

The door opened and Ben entered.

He took off his coat and heavy cloth cap, shook himself, and walked across to her, leaving little pools of water in his boot-tracks across the bare floor.

"I hope you're feeling better, but I wish to God you had died before you came," he said with the flat Yankee abruptness. "I loved you the moment I saw you."

She stared at him.

"You have a queer way of showing it. You seem to be a queer family, you and your father. He said the same."

"Don't make fun of me. I mean it. What did you come for? I would have stopped you if I had known. Can't you get away?"

"If you love me so much, why don't you help me?"

He lifted his hands in a helpless gesture.

"You're my father's wife, and he has always been kind to me. What can I do? But this is no place for you. It's a crime—you and an old man like that."

"I suppose you're another one of the things he owns," she said bitterly, striking at him in her self-scorn.

She did not know that he had opposed his father seriously for the first time in his life, on the evening of her arrival, standing over her body until the old man, astonished by the resistance, yielded.

"If you were half a man," Mary went on, "and loved me as you claim to, you'd get me out of this. I didn't know what I was doing when I came."

"There are things that are right and things that are wrong," said Ben steadily, "and you can't make a right out of two wrongs. You've married him, and you've got to stick to him. But I'll do what I can for you."

He could not do much, for Jesse, in his own choice phrase, ruled his roost; but he made her winter as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, in that dreary place.

Using his invention to break the monotonous strain of the old man's tyranny, he read and played games with her through the long evenings, brought her small presents, took her to walk or skate or drive when the chance offered, making a comedian of himself for her amusement. Gradually she came to trust and depend on him, without realizing the nature of her real feeling. She had never had attention of that sort, had known nothing of any kind of love which did not want something from its object. They were like children together, she and Ben, untroubled by the miserable bickerings of childhood.

She became almost happy, and showed it in looks and manner, gaining a colour that flushed the smooth white skin with the delicacy that makes a man's breath catch, and singing when the slave-driver was out of earshot.

Once he came up unexpectedly behind her, and when he questioned her she said thoughtlessly that she was singing for her lover.

"Some day you may be singing for a dead man," he told her.

She had been on the verge of forgetting his dangerous quality. Would he really be murderous, she wondered. She had the female doubt which never dies.

She spoke to Ben about it, opening the subject a little awkwardly, for they had formed the habit of not mentioning the old man direct in their conversations.

They stood in a sheltered spot of March sunshine behind the carriage-house, and Mary had in her hand a measure from which she had been throwing a noon feed to the silly hens. Her hair was coiled low on her neck; she looked like a young girl.

"What could he do in a pinch, Ben? He's old and he's getting shaky."

"Never count on it, Mary. You don't know what he's capable of."

"Ah, this everlasting heavy stuff!" she said. "It bores me. The gloom, and the preaching—yes, and the wrinkled old fool. I can't help it if he is your father, I'm sick of him. I'll get out. I think he's a bluff, with all his talk of killing."

"Maybe, but you'd better be careful."

"I'll think you're a bluff, too, Ben, if you talk so much about being careful. You act as old as he." The Spring was in her, her eyes were at work. "There's no fun in you any more. Has your blood got thin too?"

He looked at her with tortured eyes.

"You know well enough what's the matter with me."

"No I don't, Ben. How would I know what a dumb man thinks?"

"I'll show you," he muttered, and caught her in his arms.

Her reaction to his passion had more curiosity and triumph than love in it at first, but her youth, denied its fruition, arose to meet his. Memories of the cripples who had touched her—even the current horror of aged flesh—dropped away under his lips. By the time the tension of his arms relaxed, the hunting instinct of the female was secondary.

She stared curiously at him, searching the clear eyes so easy to read, and so unlike others which had been close to hers. Dropping the wooden measure, she lifted her hands and she clasped them behind his neck, and her eyes closed.

"There's something different about you. Don't let me go."

Perhaps it was the first generous thing she had done, consciously, in womanhood.

As her realization of love grew, she would have surrendered herself to him with a frank abandon, if he had been willing; but the old man loomed between them. When, in the struggle between passion and the moral tradition, respect for tradition was uppermost, Ben almost shrank from her. The morbid self-deceit of the Stives line had broken in him, and he thought for himself, but he could not escape utterly from his inheritance, and whatever his belief, love for his father barred his way. So long as there was no open declaration between him and Mary, the situation could be endured. With passion aflame, it was scarcely tenable.

The strain communicated itself vaguely to Jesse. Weakening visibly, receding fast, after his false return to youth, into the half-light of age with its delusions and irritable revolts against an invincible foe, he seemed not to perceive the stark fact that confronted him, but to acquire through his natural jealousy a general distrust.

In Mary's handling of him there was a gruesome twist, akin to the Portuguese dandling of corpses.

Fearing him a little, and fearing much more that if she broke with him completely, Ben would desert her, she revenged herself in small ways. She did not hesitate to sing her songs, or to translate them unasked. She tempted him to the danger-point, as boys tease a bull, or balance on the edge of a chasm.

"O papel em que eu escrevo
Tiro-o da palmada mão,
A tinta sae-me dos olhos
A penna do coraçao.

"The paper I used to write to my lover is the palm of my hand, and the pen is my heart itself," she sang mockingly, and the old man clenched his bony jaws above the rifle that he was oiling.

"What are you doing with the gun?" she asked him. "You'll never catch any lover of mine to shoot him. You're not quick enough."

She went to Ben with the rifle story.

"He gets up in the night and sits by the window with the gun across his knees, talking to himself and looking out at the hill. He gives me the creeps."

"He used to do that when the lawsuit was on," Ben said.

A revulsion shook him, and he turned on her sharply. "What do you want to plague him for? He hasn't long to live, and in a few years we'll be free to do as we please. We're a pair of cowards! Why don't you let him alone?"

"I hate him for what he's done, and because he keeps me away from you." She drew his face down to hers. "Come to me, Ben. Forget him. What does an old man like that matter? We're young, you and I, we're alive. Come to me, I love you."

She caressed his face with the hands of desire, and every line of her expressed her yearning.

They had the angers and lassitudes of love deferred, the doubts of themselves and of each other that madden those who wait. Driven by the mysterious impulse of a longing that had grown too strong to be subdued in that lonely place where they thought constantly of it, they tortured each other when together, and were miserable if apart. Sometimes they thought they wished

that the old man might guess the truth, but the son shrank from delivering the blow, and the wife dared not do it without his consent.

At last Ben could endure the struggle no longer, and decided to go.

The scene of parting was full of the argument and reiteration of such scenes, the useless twistings and assaults of minds caught in a net. The woman, pale and bitter, wrung dry of passion for the moment, clung desperately. Explanations sagged and fell, recriminations broke from their own weight. In a sick void of the emotions he tore himself away at last.

He had told his father nothing more than that he was going to the city, and Jesse had opposed him violently, but only on that basis. After the exit, the last vestige of kindness went out of the old man, and he became as bleak as stone. He set his wife to work.

"If you can't be a woman, you can earn your salt," he told her. "The Lord hates them that don't labour. Get down on the floor and scrub for it."

He watched her like a jailer, and she did the crone's tasks: cooking, carrying water, washing, even splitting wood.

The work made her sullen. She seldom spoke, and her eyes began to hold a faint reflection of the New England look.

In a month, Ben came back for a Sunday afternoon hour. He was lean and fever-bright, and the muscles under his eyes twitched when he talked. He turned pale when he saw her.

"Your hands! What have you done to them?"

She held up the swollen fingers silently, and he whirled on his father; but Jesse had turned his back in the sink-room. Ben asked with his eyebrows the question:

"Does he know?"

"He thinks I have a lover, but he don't know who it is," she replied in her throaty, mocking voice, which she did not take the trouble to lower.

Her venom reached the giant.

He turned and came into the kitchen and stood looking at them, a battered monument to passion uncontrolled.

"Get to work!" he said to Mary. "Set out a meal for the boy. He'll be hungry for food after a month of city vittles."

Ben left just before sundown, while the long shadows slanted, and Mary walked with him to the gate, and a few rods down the road, regardless of Jesse.

The intoxication of the season was in the air, the scent of the earth's mysterious reawakening, so potent when the vernal twilight approaches. The country had dressed itself in soft new green and the delicately tinged white of the fruit blossoms, just breaking into bloom in the field and hillside orchards. It was as though a bed were prepared for Spring, the bride, and care and ugliness had been banished for the time—as though the Pilgrim Jaaveh had closed his eyes in alien meditation, while the wood-creatures of pagan days, released, came out to make a holiday to Pan's sweet high piping, and the Elder Gods, who never die, looked on.

The two walked together a little way through the armistice, their moods fusing silently, and parted after a caught breath and a word or two.

Mary returned slowly to the house with a face triumphant, aloof, the eyes glimmering like a dryad's in the waning light. If she had met her husband she would not have seen him; but he had gone to the barns, and for a long time she sat alone while darkness gathered, holding her happiness like a tangible thing.

Jesse was to make his semi-annual visit to Ware the next week. It was his custom on those momentous occasions to drive early to Plattery, take the mid-morning train to the city, spend the day in haggling and buying, and return at night, arriving but little earlier than midnight at Heifer Hill. He clung tenaciously to schedule, in the manner of an old man fearing to yield an inch lest his whole line of resistance to weakness break.

He drove off in the cool morning, and Mary did two-thirds of the house-

work, smiling secretly, and encouraged the failing and querulous crone through the other third. Later she sent the creature to a neighbour's, and bathed and dressed, choosing clothing that she had not worn for a long time in that house, and stopping often, idly, between the long, sweeping strokes of the brush over her dark heavy hair, or standing behind the screen of the honeysuckle at the window, with a white garment in her hands. As she hummed her song, "*O papel em que eu escrevo*," her look had the closed wisdom of the chosen woman, sure of an appointed time.

At six o'clock she sat down to wait—secure and pale and fair, purified by sheer intensity of desire.

A few moments later, Jesse's footfall sounded behind her, and his voice said:

"Go up to the bedroom!"

She sat deprived of strength by the hideous suspicion that struck her with the force of a blow.

"Go up!" he repeated gratingly. "Go up, or I'll kill you where you are!"

"What are you going to do?" she stammered.

He made no reply, but motioned toward the door leading to the stairway. Supporting herself by clutching at the furniture, she managed to reach the door, and slowly mount the stairs.

He pushed her into the bedroom.

She gripped the foot of the wooden bedstead, and twisted around to face him. Her mouth became a fantastic oval when she saw that he held his rifle in his hand.

She flattened her body against the bed, and thrust out both hands stiffly, unconsciously imitating an attitude she had learned on the stage.

"Don't kill me! Don't kill me!"

He paid no attention to her, but locked the door and seated himself by the open window, through which he could see, beyond the screening honeysuckle vine that shed a flood of heavy fragrance on the suave night air, the hill-side orchard of pear trees, a ghostly sea of greenish white in the moonlight.

Mary clung, half-crouched, to the bed. The old man thrust the rifle-barrel through an opening in the honeysuckle screen, and waited, in the moonlit silence which was so tense that it had the effect of a continued shriek.

CHAPTER IX

"WELL," said my brother impatiently, "well, get to Hecuba. How does it finish? What's the end?"

"You guessed it," I said. "I could no more lie about the ending of that story than renege on a thirteenth trick. It isn't done."

My brother groaned.

"He got him," I went on hastily. "He drilled Bennie clean, coming down through the orchard with his heart leaping ahead of him to the magic window. Most likely Ben never knew what hit him—and whom the gods love die young, you know. Trite but true."

We got down from the car in front of the town clerk's house, which was also his office.

"Do you mean that the old devil knew who he was shooting?" my brother asked.

"Ah, there you have me. Actions and motives are mixed, except in fiction. But whether he did or not, he rounded out his destiny logically. All the merciless proverbs in the world apply to him. He went scot-free so far as the Law was concerned, of course. The woman wouldn't testify against him. Even she had a sense of fate."

"Or fear."

"As you like."

THE WINNER

By Cameron Kelley

IT fell on a day, while the high gods snored on Mount Olympus, that three fair women who were travelling together fell into a slough. When they had made their way to the edge as best they might, there accosted them Fate, who had stood afar, beholding them.

"What now will ye do?" she said. "For behold, ye are covered with mire, and all who see will know what hath happened ye. Were it not better to return to the slough?"

"Who will know," they said, "when we have washed off the mire?"

"Mock me not," said Fate darkly. "When ye meet your lover, will ye tell him, or no?"

They pondered.

Then said the youngest woman (who was the most beautiful of all the daughters of Eve), "I will tell him; and if he love me at all, he will love me the better for my truthfulness."

The second of the three fair women, who was clever, more than all women, said, "I shall not tell him. He will love me the better for keeping his ideal unshattered."

But the oldest of the three women, who was wise, smiled in the face of Fate and said nothing. And having rid themselves of all trace of their disaster, the three women went their way, and Fate followed on their trail like unto a bloodhound.

And the great gods sat up and took notice.

And lo, it came to pass that when the lover of the youngest woman had wearied of her beauty a little, that he saith unto her, "Why hadst thou not lied to me? But the one little lie, and I could have found my ideal in thee and have loved thee for ever. But now I must seek further." And he took his way.

"You lose," said Fate to the woman.

And likewise the lover of the second woman, for all her cleverness, after a time saith unto her, "Why hast thou dealt falsely with me? For behold it hath been told me that thou also wert in the slough. Hadst thou spoken me truthfully I could have forgiven thee, and loved thee the better. But now, farewell." And he left her for ever.

"I win," said Fate.

But the third fair woman, in her great wisdom, saith unto her lover, "Ask me nothing. My name is Mystery. Whence I come ye know not, and whither I go ye shall not know. Love me now, for the summer is fleeting, and who knoweth what the harvest time shall bring?"

And lo, before he had time to weary of her, or ever the summer was ended or the harvest begun, she fled away in the twilight, in the evening, in the blackness and darkness of night, and found her a new lover, and laughed at Fate.

Fate said nothing. Fate is a poor loser.

And the high gods lay back and laughed.

THE BUBBLE OF BLISS

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

I

IT was the hour for the arrival of the evening stage. He stood with a long line of people at the edge of the verandah, and he was the tallest picket in the fence. In his case Nature had set up an ambitious scaffolding and had then run short of materials to make a comfortable edifice. He was so thin that his clothes had given up trying to fit and fallen into corrugations, like an elephant's hide. And as though it were not enough to be built like a meridian he had let his appearance go to the dogs by permitting a moustache that aped the walrus's. He had accepted its downward proclivities as unquestioningly as he accepted his chronic indigestion. Everything about him ran north and south save his sense of humour, which was hell-west and crooked. His name was Dawson, but he used to say he wished it were Flannigan; thought names with double consonants bully. He was distinguished in his ugliness and knew it, but he also knew that his smile was an alleviation.

Endowed with a fortune which his stomach would not permit him to enjoy, he roamed the world in hopeful yet hopeless peregrinations, like Alice in Wonderland, inclined to question the good of it all, why nothing made sense, and all the little crooked paths of adventure invariably led back into the same house.

Each year he came to this lonely resort in New Hampshire, the only Mecca on a long road running between Twin Mountains and Maine; each year he said with a stern set to his mental jaw that he would not return. The hotel's patrons were perennials, consistently upper-class, and his attitude toward them was profane. Yet something held him. Ridiculously enough, he said it was the food, but as his was a prescribed diet it was more probably the scenery which nourished him. Three mountains rise over an intervening valley and are custodians of a silence intimate, mysterious, prolonged. Dawson had been known to take an accidental companion aside in the flush of morning or in the austerity of twilight and speak about these mountains in a quite confidential, excited way, as though he had proprietary right in them.

Here the hours of the day offering obvious pursuits; precisely at six in the evening one was invited to watch for the stage. Dawson's pride gave him its contempt because he had sagged into senseless imitation of what the others did. It was as though he shared the general expectancy. For what? Letters? He seldom wrote and rarely received any.

Propinquity was the one condition of the personal element that amounted to shucks with him. A letter seemed as devoid of blood as a snow-drift. He liked friendships to happen; he considered it a hoodoo to plan and connive for them.

Besides, this watching for the stage of life to deposit its freight, this watching for the kettle to boil, for the jack to pop out of the box, provoked Providence to do its worst. Yet illogically he watched, his face as expressionless as the faces of those that masked passionate anticipation. The only difference was that he did not care—not a bit. He had grown cynical from playing the rôle of Sentimental Tommy with romance for ever eluding him.

At length the stage arrived. It came rollickingly, kicking up the dust behind it, dimming the enthusiastic geraniums before the inn. There were mail bags and packages, two passengers, a man and a woman, both products of depressing civilization, yet the woman more than usually provocative. As she brushed by him on the step he had a faint but pleasant tingling. She was old enough to know something; she looked too wise to know too much. Her figure was plump and jolly. She wore a small, amorous fur coiled about her neck.

When Dawson went in to dinner he consulted the directory and read two dissimilar names. He had taken it for granted that they were husband and wife. Their indifference had made him think that. Indifference may be the manifestation of either intimacy or strangeness.

She was a Mrs. Henry V. Sayre; the man's name was Humphrey Malling. They would be put at his table, newcomers always were and remained there till his lack of appetite had disheartened them away, just as cold weather scares the birds. Dawson seldom regretted them. It was long since even the appetite of his interest had been quickened. He went to his room and donned abject evening clothes before invading the dining room to repair waste tissue.

There he was accustomed to sit in lugubrious isolation, weighing his food on tiny silver scales and coping grimly with the inhibitions nature had laid upon him. Soon, true to hunch, the male newcomer materialized to share his ostracism. This, according to the wet ink on the register, would be Humphrey Malling, a big man, big enough to wear that name without stretching it.

"Good evening," conceded Dawson, like a walrus that is tamed.

"Good evening," returned Malling, with the surprised intonation of one who finds himself magnetic to a crank. In truth, clear across the dining room he had remarked that formidable figure, the dour man behind his pharmaceutical array of silver.

Malling was fortunate, an attractive forty, graceful rather than robust, yet compared to Dawson, immensely fit in every way. His hair was prematurely gray, his face sensitive and aware with channels about the eyes that laughter had made in time of freshet. Both men spoke gravely and tentatively, each warmed by the other's reserve. Malling had no pockets full of chat to be turned inside out to a casual acquaintance, and Dawson knew the value of conserving personality.

And along toward the end of the meal Mrs. Sayre was given third seat at table. It was the last seat in the dining room, and as though he divined some impropriety in the arrangement, the punctilious old manager himself accompanied her and introduced the two men. They stood as though on springs and subsided mechanically after she had taken her place.

Mrs. Sayre smiled upon them with a faint hint of drollery and ordered without the slightest self-consciousness. She was wholesome. She had charm which she carried carelessly on the highroad to forty, not as some women carry their attractions, like a basket of eggs. There seemed no danger that anything about her would crack or spill. Her complexion was good and made just a little bit better with rouge. Her hair looked vigorous and well-brushed and was combed back boyishly; and the décolleté gown of scarlet, cooled with silver, lighted a jolly hearth-fire in the poor invalid's brain.

The first words he spoke to her formed his apologia; her answer was characteristic.

"I hope that you won't mind my bird-cage diet," he said, soberly, "nor my warehouse habit of weighing everything I eat," and she returned with a twinkle from her deep-set, curly eyes.

"On the contrary, if we weigh our words why should we not weigh our food?"

For a full moment he maintained

that elaborate melancholy, then suddenly he smiled and she thought,

"For heaven's sake, the man is attractive. What a pity that he looks and feels like that!"

But soon she saw that in some paradoxical way his pessimism and disability were assets.

"It has been my experience," he now told her, "that words which are weighed lose their savour and the same things hold good with food. Fortunately, I don't have to count the calories in my conversation."

"No," she observed slowly, "I imagine not."

At her right the man Malling might have been seen to expand and betray evidence of sympathy as though some spring in him had been touched.

"I once knew a man," he put in quietly, "who said that his mind worked in opposite channels. He was apt to think of food as æsthetic or romantic, while love seemed to him greasy or sickish or overdone."

"Oh, the soul is a poor thing," took up Dawson with conviction. "It's the slave of its servant, the stomach. The cook is for ever discharging the mistress."

"And I daresay," sighed Mrs. Sayre, "that our best or our worst impulses are directly attributable to the last meal." And she raised her soup spoon with a facile hand.

II

That was the beginning of the triumvirate, for Malling and Mrs. Sayre refused to be dislodged from what they called The Island of St. Helena. They became clannish as befitted exiles, and vain of being birds of a feather.

With the glad gusto of discovery they had come to recognize that Dawson was perhaps the one worth-while and unconventional soul in the hotel. Emerson said, "We pray to be conventional. But the wary Heaven takes care you shall not be if there is anything good in you."

The three formed a perfect consolidation; they could discuss God and the universe and still hold their personal mysteries intact. Malling was obviously sensible to Mrs. Sayre's attraction; Dawson liked that it should be so. It enabled him to experience jealousy, a delectable poignancy which proved that he was alive. There were entire meals when he forgot his stomach without reaping the whirlwind of its retaliation.

She was an adorable woman; Malling was a delightful friend and a stimulating rival. Their seances, like serial fiction, always broke off at a provocative point to be continued in the next. They talked of religion with the patronage of precocious children; they fed upon such subjects as doctors, soul-cures, mineral waters, foreign resorts, books, plays and people. They were discriminating in their praise, playful and prolonged in their damnations. And in their enjoyment they did not heed the gossip which presently sprang up about them like witch-grass in a garden.

Their pleasure was not understood; therefore, it was suspected. A myth became current that Mrs. Sayre was a divorcée. Bye and bye it grew bold, embellishing itself. It said now that she had buried one husband and divorced two, and it expressed itself as on guard for that poor Mr. Dawson. But "poor Mr. Dawson" would not have minded if the lady had counted five husbands in her "strong toils of grace." All he asked was to adore her for a little and to forget that he was a battered wreck gone to pieces in shoal water with his cargo of bismuth. He made a point of never speculating about her past or present state, accepting her as the bully friend she was, sprung into his life full-panoplied like Minerva out of Zeus.

It could not be said that Mrs. Sayre showed favouritism. If she walked with Malling in the afternoon, she sauntered with Dawson after dinner, a tender, merry and indulgent companion to that whimsical fellow. She charmed with the delicate allure of her personal-

ity, her clothes that smelled like field flowers in summer, a perfume that was hardly a perfume at all but seemed to emanate from her rosy self. She took his arm with simplicity and he thrilled more than as though she attached coquetry to the act. Her eyes were her chief charm and for ever laughing. They were small and sloeblack in colour, tucked in with cunning corners, and the lashes were incredibly curly.

Once when Dawson had been cataloguing his afflictions she said mischievously:

"How almost insufferable you must think me with my cheero doctrine, Mr. Dawson! I've always longed to be a sober woman, a wronged or a tragic woman, to have a story about myself that would allow me to attitudinize, but somehow I never could, just as I've never been able to believe in marriage as a continuation of romance or in heaven, except as a fairy tale."

The three had climbed a mountain that morning, and now Mrs. Sayre and Dawson basked on the summit while Malling prowled for greater points of vantage. She wore a jaunty cloth skirt, revealing neat ankles and well-cut Oxfords, and she adorned a boulder in frank fatigue, hands in her pockets, her hat on her knee and her hair at the edge of her forehead breaking into curl.

"I'm glad that you're cheerful," Dawson assured her, giving an enthusiastic tug to his disreputable moustache. "I believe in it—for women. Lord, don't I just! Keeps their hair from turning gray and their complexions intact. But God knows a cheerful man is an abomination. I hold with Mark Twain that if a man has reached middle age and isn't a pessimist he hasn't seen enough of the world. Of course," he added, conscientiously, "there may be exceptions. I fancy Malling is one of them, awfully optimistic chap almost all the time, and he could charm a bird off a bush."

Then, as though the tribute had been dragged from him by some inexorable demand of justice, and having paid his debt of praise, he could indulge in fault-finding:

"There's just one thing I don't like about Malling," he fumed boyishly, and frowned fiercely the while.

"And that is—" she prompted with a mischievous gleam.

"And that is," Dawson began again, then blurted desperately, "it's something in his attitude toward you, as though you had known one another in a previous existence—a rather smug, uncanny thing that rides me to death."

She laughed once, and the sound was like a single drop of water falling in a cool place.

"For instance?"

Dawson beat among the dead leaves with a searching stick.

"For instance," he said irritably, "just now when he asked you if you minded the climb—if you didn't think you had better sit."

She lifted her shoulders in light ridicule.

"What could be more natural?"

Dawson glowered.

"One would have inferred that you had a heart-weakness that old Malling had been nursing along for years."

She gave him her merry eyes, placatingly.

"But it's true. I have a heart-weakness, and no doubt I've mentioned it to him."

Dawson was demoralized by her smile and conceded his own.

"But you've never mentioned it to me," he sulked frankly. "Jolly unfair, I call it. I've often wondered why I miss out so damnably in everything life has to offer, in matters of health or heart or home. Bliss has always been a bubble that broke when it was the rosiest and showered me with soapy nothings."

"But we may as well be reconciled to Fate," she pointed out, sensibly. "It's always a conservation of energy."

"Bah!" came from him in deep disgust. "Only hypocrites even pretend to be. I knew a woman who was killed by a folding-bed closing in on her. At

the funeral the minister intoned, 'God has seen fit to come among us and take our sister to Himself' and 'God' this and 'God' that, but the family sued the folding-bed company just the same."

She smiled at his whimsicality.

"But the man who suffers most is the man who enjoys most," she tried him with another platitude, then leaned back to enjoy his anger.

"Humbug," said Dawson, laconically. "Real suffering is elastic; it never leaves an inch for joy to step in. My envy is for the man who has lived his life to the full in pleasure. Look at mine—empty as a bug's ear."

His tone had deepened from the merely ironical to such intense personal bitterness as startled them both, and his look plunged sheer into the lake below, as though to these depths he would consign his outworn self. Mrs. Sayre was touched in a sudden helpless way, taken off guard, womanized. Somehow her hand went over his and she gave it a little squeeze.

"But you're very attractive, Leland dear," she yearned to him, tenderly, and she had resurrected his Christian name. "Why, you're the most human thing on earth and the most lovable."

And the amazing part of it was her mellow gaze did not falter; it held in his generously. It thrilled him by its temerity, its honesty, its candid sweetness. Perhaps she had meant only to be comradely, but Dawson found her divine. In that rare moment all the rags and tatters of his life flowed into velvet, into gold and silver. The circumstance of her charm, her pity—the very setting of the scene—all were quite perfect in his imagination. And he told himself solemnly that if he died this moment he would, after all, have come off top-hole.

"Thanks," he whispered, huskily; "thanks," and was still dazed by the brightness of her eye and lip, her dark hair patterned with sunlight, the flower-texture of her hand. "No one ever did such a thing before."

She laughed a trifle nervously, tears in her eyes.

"Oh, I'm a hundred women," she flung out, rather wildly. "I could be something different to as many people. I—"

Suddenly he was obsessed by longing to know if she were bound or free.

"I suppose you'd like to know—" she began, then broke off, and disengaged her hand.

She was self-conscious at last only because she was finding him ridiculously attractive, this shabby, ill, ironical wreck. She, too, stared into the valley where a ripe, red barn sunned in the open like an apple.

"Yes, yes," he pressed after her. "It's hell not to know—"

She laughed again and bit her lip.

"Oh, I'm free enough. I'll never admit otherwise."

"Free?" he echoed incredulously.

Her face was flushed and vital.

"I tie my own knots," she stammered enigmatically, and suddenly sprang to her feet. Malling was sauntering along the path toward them.

III

All day after that Dawson lived in a state of suppressed excitement, experiencing for once "the wild and guilty joy" of being a damn fool.

He was middle-aged, of course, he hadn't kept himself very spruce, he had his devilish infirmity; but on the other hand he was rich as Midas, no one considered him dull, and he suspected that in the rôle of devoted husband was where he would shine. As a small lad he had been his mother's favourite, so concerned for frailer things that he had spent hours removing caterpillars from the sidewalks; in his blue checked pinafore he had exercised stern vigilance in the kitchen and screamed when a fowl was put into the oven. Oh, he would certainly know how to cherish this woman with the laughing eyes! What if bliss were no bubble to burst in the face of his wistfulness? What if it were tangible and lasting?

That evening he linked arms with

Malling on the veranda after dinner and something of his subtle excitement must have communicated itself. Mrs. Sayre was playing bridge, and as they promenaded back and forth they could periodically glimpse her through the window. She wore a gown of white sequins.

"A capital woman!" ruminated Dawson aloud. "White's really the only colour fine enough for her!"

Malling turned upon him a look of cordial amusement.

"'She had three lilies in her hand, and the stars in her hair were seven,'" he quoted innocently. "Yes, she is—unusual."

Dawson inhaled the evening air with elaborate carelessness.

"One doesn't like to pry, but it would be a satisfaction to know something about her."

"Now you're becoming conventional," the other chided. "As if it could matter."

Dawson squirmed within his coat.

"Do you mean that you're not the least interested in Henry V. Sayre?" he inquired incredulously.

"No," declared Malling; "only in Mrs. Henry V. Sayre." In the darkness laughter had spilled from his eyes and was filling the channels about them.

They braced against the wind at the corner.

"It seems," said Dawson, comically, "that it ought to matter to at least one of us."

"Oh, Dawson, dear chap," cried Malling. "You remind me of the two lisping brothers, Pondison and Dennison and their paragon of a housekeeper. 'One of uth,' said Dennison, 'ought to marry her'; and Pondison replied, 'You marry her, Dennithun.' How should we decide such a thing when we're both head over heels? No. It would be too painful."

"I don't mind telling you," Dawson confided airily, "that I'm tremendously hard hit, old man," and later remembered the look of understanding and regret that grew in Malling's eyes. But no word came from him, for it was precisely at this juncture that the interruption occurred. They saw it through the window; they saw the confusion of card tables and the jumble of colours as the women arose and pressed about a certain chair.

"Someone seems to have fainted," observed Dawson unintelligently as they flattened their noses against the pane, and Malling exclaimed:

"It's Nina!"

Even at that crucial moment the instinctive use of her name stung Dawson like a whip; he followed, cold as though wrapped in a sea-fog of November. Through the deserted office and into the cardroom hurried the two men, with Malling in the lead. Malling, panic-stricken, yet authoritative, made his way to Mrs. Sayre's side.

"Allow me, please," he elbowed the inefficient. "I'm used to such attacks. The first thing is to get her upstairs," and before the astonished eyes of everyone he lifted her bodily and, with difficulty, for she was no light weight, bore her aloft, with several excited matrons comprising his suite.

One of them opened the bed for Mrs. Sayre, one raised the window, but it was Malling himself who prowled boldly among her belongings for the spirits of ammonia or whatever restorative it was he used. He worked over Mrs. Sayre in the way of a natural protector, using the name "Nina" many times.

And then, as she was slow to revive, he turned on them, feverishly, ungraciously:

"Leave us, please! I must loosen her clothing," suddenly sensitive to the situation when the eyes of one blazed scandalization.

Nevertheless, public opinion be hanged where a serious issue was involved. The first-aid unit withdrew then precipitately; it shrunk like a receding tide. These ladies followed the moon of their leader down the stairs and into the office, relishing their outrage, dizzy with intoxication of malice. The office immediately became a tower

of babel, composed of the inn's entire personnel, save for one—Leland Dawson.

Dawson had followed the object of his dreams, instinctively, wistfully, had stood in the corridor outside the room until the ladies emerged and it was closed in his face. Then, white, stricken, nearly too ill to move, he had dragged himself to his room. It was suddenly the most distasteful of rooms, meaningless, unillumined. He collapsed on the edge of his bed lankily.

Four doors away Nina lay with her eyes open, and in them, as in twin mirrors Malling saw a sudden telepathic intelligence. She knew what had passed, she appreciated the finest shadings of the situation. She was really a most astounding woman. She laughed, but two large tears formed on her curly lashes:

"Oh, Humphrey, what a mess! What's the next move, my dear, whatever shall we say now? I mind most for poor darling Dawson."

Malling held her hand in the stereotyped way of the fussy, domestic husband.

"It will be bad for Dawson," he admitted ruefully; "but I find I mind most about the tabby-cats. You should have seen them, Nina, Pharisees every one. How about it, dear, are you really fit again?"

But she did not heed.

"Go tell him," she pleaded with almost a desperate urgency, and Malling went.

He found the door of his friend's room open and Dawson within, sitting on the bed with his shoulders hunched in a cold, rheumatic fashion.

As Malling entered, he glanced up with a dull eye, but made no effort at greeting. Malling took silence for consent, and seated himself alongside. He felt very affectionate toward Dawson, a bit regretful, too.

"Old man," he said, "I don't need to tell you that Nina is my wife. There never was a Henry V. Sayre."

Dawson said nothing and Malling went on warmly:

"In the beginning we were just like other people, but we had too much money and no children, so soon we were losing one another and losing our own identities. Wherever we went we were lumped and left alone. Being a 'couple' isn't being two separate entities; it's being a sort of Siamese twin. That's the dickens with marriage. There is no freedom for individual adventure. Nina isn't just a wife; she's a friend and she was sensible enough to see this. We hit on the plan of spending our holidays in the same place, yet as strangers. Dawson, you've no idea what a difference it's made in our lives. It's kept the bloom on them. We have this delicious secret between us; we feel like sweethearts; we feel clandestine. There's an element of guilt in it that lends zest." He was silent a moment, rueful. "Never until to-night has a situation come up to unmask us. Now I suppose we'll have to let the cat out of the bag to appease Dame Grundy."

He put his hand on Dawson's shoulder, for Dawson was breathing hard.

"What about the danger," he spluttered weakly, "the danger of losing your wife to another man?"

He was remembering that sweet moment on the mountain, when she had told him of her complex nature, when she had led him a little way along the old road to Paradise. In that gipsy mood her husband's love had been jeopardized and nothing would ever convince Dawson otherwise.

"Oh," he heard Malling's voice as through a mist, "it isn't half so dangerous as the other way!"

Dawson turned slow eyes upon him, faintly contemptuous, wholly belligerent. They were the cat and the canary, he thought, and Malling had made a mouthful of him. His ire rose.

"A probable tale," he bawled, sorely, "very ingenious, very modern, but I don't believe a damned word of it!"

Malling smote his knee.

"Good!" he cried. "I hoped you wouldn't."

THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

By James Reynolds

THE theatres were disgorging their crowds, tributaries to the vast human stream of Broadway. Taxicabs wove in and out of the hurrying throng. Suddenly there was an exclamation of amazement, and the crowd rushed towards her, hemming her in on all sides. Cries of incredulity and bewilderment rose quick and fast. The gaping spectators were fairly stunned, for the like had not been seen on Broadway in twenty years. She was wheeling a baby carriage.

HOME

By David Morton

GOING all softly through the secret snow,
All hushed about with stillness in the wood,
There is no need to say the thing we know,
How life is glad for us and rich and good.
Despite the whiteness, strange upon the hill,
Our homing feet, unerring, keep the way,
Threading the iron twilight, keen and still,—
Paths learned and loved through many a happy day.

And suddenly, smell of the smoke drifts past,
Friendly and good; and then a window glows
Yellow across the evening, and at last
The little house close-kept among the snows!
Into the warm and mellow room we go,
All silent still, and glad of what we know.

IF loving interferes with business—marry.

THE GRAND PASSION

By Paul Hervey Fox

I

MY friend, Etheridge, is an amateur of music, and can afford that happy vocation. He played for me the other afternoon in his handsome, dignified rooms overlooking the Park. His fingers, travelling idly to his whim, struck the first cold, pure notes of MacDowell's *To A Wild Rose*.

There are, of course, many sorts of suggestions which carry us back in memory to an old time, to an unforgotten hour. One hint of perfume, and the middle-aged man, half nodding in his theatre-seat, starts, and stares across the years, seeing again some face of beauty and, for a moment, seeing himself again young, reckless, laughing, and ardent. Perhaps you are superior to this weakness? For my part I may as well admit that it is a sentimentality I cannot resist.

The first time I heard *To A Wild Rose* came up before me as Etheridge played. I saw the village of Streamlands; the square house on the hill; the grave and reflective face of Mr. Griffith; Will Elliot's dark head, dark eyes, and gentle manner; Mrs. Griffith infinitely peaceful beside the window; and at the piano, Theodora Griffith playing in the dimness of that hushed and fragrant room.

How it all comes back! The voices, the faint sound of laughter, the warm sunlight beating upon the elms, the instants stamped by memory into the finality of a picture!

It was my Fashionable Aunt who was responsible for my entry into that life. She had adopted me for the summer, and in Streamlands—why on earth she was there, I can't imagine—deserted me suddenly for an invitation where boys of twelve were not appreciated. Somehow she induced Mrs. Griffith to take charge of me until she returned; and I was perfectly content.

The Griffith home had the peculiar quality of atmosphere. Everything in the household was decorous, was gracious, as if hallowed by a tradition of many years. Here and there in some quiet town one finds a family like that. I see vividly, like a dark road illumined by sudden lightning, that evening in the ancient, friendly house when I first had an inkling of Theodora Griffith's secret.

Because the night was cool, Annie, the elderly maid, had laid a fire in the dining room. We used no other light. Mr. Griffith said grace in his sonorous, solemn voice while I peeped at him through my fingers.

Will Elliot was our guest that evening. He was in love with Theodora, I knew, and she had refused him. That seemed to me the correct thing to do. Will Elliot would never be a pirate. I did not consider him attractive. He was, however, an extremely kind and likeable fellow. He had a thin, sensitive face, and very large brown eyes. There was a Latin strain in him, I imagine. But you would never have guessed it from his subdued manner, his homely, prosy viewpoint.

After dinner we went into the living room. Mr. Griffith produced his pipe and pouch and filled the former with immense care. Theodora came over and sat down near me. Outside a comrade of mine whistled for me through the open windows. With the cool effrontery

of youth I paid no attention to him whatsoever. Mr. Griffith was going to read.

Three times a week he read to us in the rich, deliberate voice that was fascinating to hear. How Ulysses on his wanderings, Sir John Falstaff in his cups, and a score of other fine fellows, lived and gestured for me in those memorable evenings!

This time he read from something, *Jane Eyre*, I think, though I'm not quite sure, and presently he came to a passage on the pangs of unrequited love. At this point Theodora rose and went out of the room with a queer swiftness.

For the first time I was aware that she was troubled by some unmentioned sorrow. I stared. Mrs. Griffith did not move, but her husband carefully shut the volume, and moving around the old room, with its innumerable books and the brown prints on the walls, turned on, one by one, the rest of the lights.

Will Elliot with his thin, firm hands pressed tightly to his knees, leaned forward silently. There was a dumb anguish on his face that was dreadful to see. In that instant I knew, somehow, what it is to feel, to respond, to understand, and yet to be inarticulate.

Boys of twelve have, at any rate, their privileges. I got up with an air of unconcern, and strolled out to the back porch, where Theodora was standing, staring out across the fields. I remember the magic night, the thousand blended sounds that rose delicately from the fields, the cool wind that very softly rustled the tops of the old elms. And I remember her standing there, a girl with slim and beautiful hands, and soft dark hair above the pale face, full of sadness and reticence.

"Miss Theodora," I said bluntly, "what's the matter?"

She never even moved at my voice, which must have been unexpected enough. But after a little while she put her hand upon my shoulder, resting it very lightly there, though still she did not answer. We went into the house together.

The discovery of that secret played havoc with my sleep in the next few days. I began to dream of stolen wills, hidden murders, and all sorts of grotesque fictions. When I did discover the actual shape of Theodora Griffith's tragedy, I was taken back. And yet I think I guessed it almost the very first moment that I saw Tristam Vibart.

II

I HAD strolled up the glen with a bow and arrow all by myself, and thence made my way to a pocket of grass walled in by foliage and an abrupt hill. This was, I knew, a favoured place to Theodora; and I half hoped to find her there. The sun was warm in that close solitude, I was sleepy from too much swimming; so presently I wriggled through the underbrush into the shadows, and, curling up, let the ants wander over me at will.

I awoke so gradually that I was not aware that I had slept; until, peering through the thicket in which I lay, I saw Theodora. I was about to cry out to her, when something in her attitude arrested the sound in my throat.

She was standing up, scarcely breathing, and staring down the hill with an odd intensity. I stared, too. I saw a man climbing towards her, and in that first glimpse I hit upon the truth.

I watched, scared and curious. He came striding towards her, a big, tall fellow with a great throat, very dark and calm and smiling. I thought a tremor went through her; I know she put out her hands quickly, conveying somehow the suggestion of a fluttered bird. Then the man very deliberately drew her into his arms, and his laughter, full of a sardonic tenderness, came in a ripple to my ears.

Her head was thrown back; her eyes were shut; and the lines of her mouth had an aspect of physical pain. She submitted to him like something that has been beaten and owns no will. I heard her voice come in a whisper:

"Tristam! You're back? You're really back? I—I tried not to think of you. Oh, if I were only dead!"

I didn't wait after that. I sneaked through the bushes with the caution of a cat. I was confused, embarrassed, angry. I decided, with the seriousness of boys, to kill this man. At seven o'clock that evening I was his devoted slave.

When I met him formally in the Griffith home later that day, my awkwardness was no doubt regarded as diffidence. I went into a corner and sat down, full of hate, to study him privately. And the boy who sat there, listening, found that his chivalrous hate weakened into a puny thing, and that his admiration grew and grew.

Tristam Vibart was a devil of a fellow. He was a magnificent talker. Not even Mr. Griffith could match those ringing tones. And the cheerful swagger, the gusto of it, the liveliness! I have heard nothing better since.

When we went into dinner, he was very dignified with Mr. Griffith, and very courteous with Mrs. Griffith. He would listen with ever so attentive an air when she chose to speak. For the most part he sat there with his head high and proud, conscious of the civilities of breeding, and equally conscious that his presence conferred honour. It was impossible to resent his assurance, his veiled arrogance. They belonged to him as fierceness belongs to the lion.

Then he began to talk. He drew everyone into that golden conversation. With a twinkle of his eye he actually fetched a chuckle out of Mr. Griffith; and he did not even neglect me. He tossed about the names of the great who were his familiars with never a suggestion of boasting. Trivial moods crossed his face; he frowned, laughed, looked sad, or ironic; there was no telling into what his adroit mind would swing next. Even his silences were packed with significance. He had been everywhere, done everything, knew everyone. And he could tell a story perfectly.

When Will Elliot dropped in in the course of the evening, Tristam Vibart treated him with the same indifferent kindliness. No doubt he couldn't hate anyone; he had for most men the affectionate contempt they feel for their dogs. And all this time Theodora never so much as looked at him. With eyes downcast she pondered unspoken things with a queer radiant look upon her face. But once I saw her lip tremble. Vibart had flung out some sentences in his impetuous way in the course of jocular argument with her father.

"I don't think so, I frankly don't. I say there's no such thing as a great love story that ends happily. The grand passion is tragic, and goes badly for one or other or both. There's Romeo and Juliet. And Abelard and Heloïse, and Pyramus and Thisbe, and Leander and the Hellespont—but that's a river, now I think of it! However, I could name dozens, and so could you, sir. And not one ends with its affairs smooth and neat and proper. And it's not only so in stories!"

He tossed his head, his eyes were bright, and he rolled on, relishing his own periods.

"A grand passion is all despair and terror, and confoundedly difficult to sustain with things running peacefully. Life breaks it to pieces with the dull, daily round or, worse, twists it into a bitter burlesque. Complete it and you kill it. Dante was wise; he avoided Beatrice. He couldn't have written those sonnets to his *wife!* The thing feeds on frustration. And most of us pretend that we desire it, when in our heart of hearts we like something far less troubling. Or so I think!"

It was then that Theodora had betrayed herself.

A grand passion! The words came to me charged with lucidity. When, afterwards, I picked up a hint here and there, and reconstructed the whole story, I saw with a still deeper comprehension.

III

Tristam Vibart, acting upon one of those whims which he never denied, had turned up in Streamlands over a year before. He had rapped at the Griffith

door to ask for some minor piece of information. Theodora had appeared, and he had held her in talk. Next, with that curious gift for making himself at ease by putting other people at theirs, he was in the house and had consented to stay for luncheon. I can't imagine anyone except Tristam Vibart doing that.

For a week he lingered on in Streamlands, superbly conscious of the sensation he was to Theodora. One night he kissed her, stroked her hair, flattered her ever so skilfully. On the following morning he left.

His going left a gap, jerked her abruptly back to the commonplace. She did not miss him, she missed something less tangible, something as vague as a spirit—a hope. Then she knew that she loved him. It wasn't to her a mild and somewhat odd flirtation. She had a direct and innocent sincerity. Every nerve in her throbbed desperately for this man alone.

Yet the thing that she did seems almost incredible for a sensible girl. She must have supposed that the ache in her heart was far too clamorous not to possess an echo. So she wrote to him an extraordinary letter, telling him that she loved him and cared to live only for him.

He should have written her frankly, of course. But Tristam Vibart accepted the confession as an amusing tribute, and never even answered her at all. Then all at once he turned up in Streamlands again, as charming, as assured, as unstable as ever.

It dawned upon Theodora with the slowness of a new idea that he didn't want to marry her, that he hadn't any intention of doing so. Under the whip of that new knowledge she lost control. Humiliating herself, she literally begged. Tristam, that cool egotist, found it immensely flattering, and kissed her goodbye with great tenderness.

He was of good family, he had at least some money, he could scribble bad verse, and paint a mediocre picture. With these acquirements as wedges, driven by his amazing magnetism, he managed to open whatever doors he chose. He knew really well almost every celebrity. He was in the wings at the more important first night, in this favoured opera box, at that famous function, at the correct luncheon, the right ball. He had an unerring instinct which never permitted him to cultivate anyone but the "best people"—the people who had arrived, or would certainly do so, in arts, in finance, in sports, in the wide, fashionable world. With the exception of Theodora.

For even Tristam Vibart's protective vanity was not proof against those irritations and disillusionments which are the price that the highly civilized pay for a complex existence. He had the need of someone quite simple and unjaded before whom he could parade his brilliance, and with whose fresh reverence he could soothe away an insistent spirit of depression.

Three or four days with Theodora was a tonic for him after a month or two in his glittering world. He went back with his vanity refreshed, his vexations gone. She, poor girl, sought to do that for which she had no natural bent: she tried to win the man by a hundred little devices and subtleties.

They were mockingly apparent; Tristam only laughed. The thing began to tell on her, began to break her pride, and it seemed to her that a great love was only a great misery. But she spoke to no one at this time, made no confidants, for all that her face spoke for her.

Things had reached this pass when I first came to the Griffith home. My meeting with Tristam Vibart was perhaps the occasion of his fifth appearance in Streamlands. I secretly hoped he would stay in the village hotel for the rest of the summer; he had given me a glimpse of all sorts of plans which only he could have conceived and carried out. We were to construct a dam in the creek, build a Punch and Judy theatre, climb a mountain, and put Hercules to shame with our wonders.

But it happened quite otherwise. The next morning Tristam Vibart had strolled leisurely up the village street and had his hand actually on our gate

when a big motor car, a rarity in those days, clattered up the road. It stopped with a screech of brakes. A man said:

"Why, Trist, what in the world are you doing here? This is luck!"

There were two ladies in the rear seat, very fashionably dressed, with the long veils and goggles that were worn then. One of them said something in a light, cool voice at which Tristam Vibart laughed. I hovered unobtrusively near, taking in the performance out of the tail of my eye.

The other woman leaned forward and spoke with little swift gestures. I saw the hero's head go up in the proud, scornful way he had.

"You think I won't?" he said. "You really think I won't?"

And with that he gave a great spring, like a boy, into the body of the car, cried something to the chauffeur, and was sitting serene and self-possessed as the car plunged down the street with a tremendous rattle. He went out of my sight like some incredible figure of romance.

I stepped dejectedly inside. Theodora was standing with her back to the window, alone in the quiet room. But I knew that she had seen, too. She looked at me with a bewildered and sorrowful air. I suppose the fancy that I didn't and couldn't understand was responsible for her frankness. Indeed, her cry seemed directed almost to herself.

"What shall I do? What can I do?"

It was then that I gave the best piece of advice that I have ever offered. I gave it by mistake.

"Miss Theodora, don't ever see him or speak to him again—" I cried and was going on to add, "until he promises to stay here for a long, long time," when something, a ludicrous contraction of throat muscles perhaps, checked me in the middle as I have indicated.

She looked at me with wide, hurt eyes, as if perceiving me for the first time, and I couldn't pump up the courage to conclude. She said in a whisper, gazing at me without a smile:

"You're right. I will. I should have long ago."

Then she turned and left me.

IV

And now I remember an odd sequence of events, the motives and causes of which were obscure to me at the time. The morning after I had offered my unintentional advice, the same big motor car clattered into Streamlands, picked up Tristam Vibart's bags at the hotel, and stopped before the Griffiths' door. The chauffeur presented a note scrawled in a bold, spattery sort of hand.

Theodora gave it back to him unopened and included with it one of her own. He touched his cap impassively and stepped back to his car.

The day after that there was a special delivery letter in the Griffith mail box. Theodora turned it over and over in her hands with a pitiful reluctance. Suddenly, as a man going into action drowns restraining thought with a heady impulse, she thrust it into a larger envelope, scratched an address down with indecent haste, and shot it gingerly into the mail box, as if it might at any moment burn her fingers. I don't know how long this familiar farce went on, but it seemed interminable, and even included a couple of unread telegrams, the sender of which she could not doubt.

Then one day Tristam Vibart came driving into Streamlands in the big car all by himself. He pulled at the Griffith bell. Annie, the elderly maid, had her instructions. She also had a hard heart. In a matter-of-fact voice she informed the visitor that Miss Theodora had told her never to admit him again.

Vibart, perplexed and enraged under his show of amusement, hung on desperately, attempting to wheedle her. For once he failed. Annie effectually put the devil behind her by shutting the door in his face. He went down the steps slowly, frowning very hard.

It was about five o'clock of a mellow afternoon, nearly two weeks later, that he appeared again. He came galloping into the village on a dusty horse, like a character in a romance. There was nothing too dramatic for Tristam Vibart. He pushed open the unlocked

door, strode by me with a fierce, blind look, and so into a room at the back which Theodora often used. I waited in hideous indecision. What should I do? Certainly I fully expected to hear agonized screams the very next moment.

My worry was relieved by the arrival of gentle Will Elliot. I ushered him into the house, talking loudly as I did so. We were confronted in the doorway of the living room by two figures, Tristam Vibart, scowling darkly, and Theodora Griffith, very white and frightened. With a little effort she spoke, holding out her hand to Elliot. I caught the words that were faltered in a low, soft voice.

"Will, I'm to marry Mr. Vibart."

The magnificent young man had been conquered! And I, who in a way was responsible for bringing it about, wondered why. I was glad, for I knew that Theodora would never be unhappy again. And—I might as well confess it—I was even more pleased because I knew Tristam was to be with us for a long time now. I wanted to build that dam.

We actually did start to build it some two or three days later. Tristam Vibart stood in the brook, throwing the rocks about violently, and chanting some rollicking ballad in sheer high spirits. Theodora, on the bank, watched him as if she feared he would suddenly vanish before her eyes. I heard her say faintly on the walk homewards:

"Tristam, I think you're the sort of man a woman dreams about."

He merely laughed in his jolly way, and replied with something inconsequential.

And now for a while I saw Tristam Vibart very little. He and Theodora were perpetually together, and I gathered, after a blunt hint or so, that my presence did not add strikingly to their pleasure. What happened in that interval therefore I had no knowledge, but I was aware that Theodora was filled with some strange, happy humility beyond my comprehension.

The time came when Vibart had to go back to town; but he was to return to us before the end of the week. I waved him good-bye as the afternoon train creaked painfully from the Streamlands station. He lifted his hat with a fine, careless gesture to Theodora and myself, and showed his charming, gay smile. And that was the last glimpse I had of Tristam Vibart.

He had disappeared again in his infinitely selfish, infinitely callous way? Not exactly. The fact is that Theodora did not come down to dinner that evening. She complained of a headache, and locked herself in her room. It was terribly quiet up there. Once I knocked at her door, but there was no sound, and I decided that she was sleeping, and crept away. It was in the neighbourhood of nine o'clock that I heard her voice calling me.

I bounded up the stairs and found her standing there. I couldn't see her, I could barely make out her figure in the dimness, and yet I sensed a spirit of intense excitement. She put a note into my hand, and asked me to take it to Will Elliot. She spoke very carefully and slowly like a person released from pain.

I found Will Elliot sitting alone on the bench he had in his garden. He struck a match, shielded it, and read the note with an impassive face, like a man reading a newspaper. Then he made a queer noise in his throat, hesitated ridiculously over a choice of caps, and began to walk towards the Griffith house. He did not speak. I had hard work to keep up with him.

Theodora was in the little room that abutted upon the rear porch. I saw Will Elliot, the unpolished, the uncultivated, go up to her with a movement that suggested the stage fright of some hopeless amateur. He looked at her hands lying upon her lap, took them in his, trembling a little, and stood there, with his head bowed forward, in a profound and motionless silence. I turned away.

For a moment I see them again, ere they fade imperceptibly into their background of sky and wooded hills and simple, ordered lives. And thinking of

them now, recalling once more that girl whose privilege it had been to suffer a grand passion, and of that simple and inarticulate fellow who loved her in his loneliness and despair, I seem to understand.

Perhaps Tristam Vibart was right. Perhaps a grand passion feeds on frustration, and, when it is rid of tragedy, becomes only prosy. But what was it that he did, what was it that he said, which drove Theodora into the arms of Will Elliot? Was it his stupendous vitality which in the end wearied and harassed her? Was it the man's vast egotism, hidden ever so thinly under a colourful mask?

I do not know, of course; and speculations are profitless. Yet at least I cannot help wondering if Tristam Vibart is greatly changed. It is difficult to imagine him grown stout and respectable. It may be that he lives far away, still the perfect lover in some girl's eyes, with all of the charm and the impossibility of a dream.

DUET

(*Old Style*)

By John McClure

"LIFE is but a silly game:
Love is full of woe."
"Shut your silly mouth for shame!—
How do ye know?"
"A greybeard with a Grecian name
Told us long ago."

"Said 'Life was but a silly game'?
Who could he have been?"
"Philosopher of wide acclaim,
Merriest of men!"
"*A greybeard with a Grecian name*—
Aristippus then?"

"Aristippus was a youth:
He it could not be."
"Who-a-devil then, forsooth,
If it was not he?"
"Old Democritus, in truth,
Told it trippingly."

"Old Democritus indeed
When his nose was red,
Drinking claret, thus decreed
Quite as we have said:
Life is but a silly screed
Better left unread!"

THE HOME MAKER

By M. H. Goesen

"HE studied chemistry; I, surgery," the eminent surgeon related. "A couple of plodding, ambitious young men we were. We shared the same inexpensive rooms, the scant funds, and the boundless hopes. We also shared the same little ray of sunshine.

"She was a naïve little creature, the landlady's daughter. Such a domestic little body! Always doing some service for the big, clumsy lodgers. She plied her needle on our buttons, her iron on our wash-ties; and after her shyness had vanished, she turned our drab rooms into cosy quarters.

"A coolness sprang up between Henry and me, as our rivalry grew. His position with the laboratory was assured; my own studies were far from completed. Small wonder I lost ground steadily. The blow fell. I could imagine their true, domestic happiness, and pursued by that picture I fled.

"Of course, we all recover. In the rush of time and work I lost track of them, had almost forgotten them till the other day. Among a crowd of patients that sought my aid, I noticed a careworn man whose face seemed familiar. The voice—yes, it was Henry.

"The man had a bad case of housemaid's knee."

VAE VICTIS

By Babette Deutsch

THE floor is petalled with sunlight
And flowers shaken
From heavy stems.
The windy air is bright.
This is the month of roses.
But I am taken
Into a room too small to hold the night;
Into a darkness where blown boughs are moving:
One with your restless arms
And your broken word.
Now is the sun a candle, storm-swept in your loving.
Now my heart is still as a thunder-threatened bird.

OUR KIND

(A COMEDY IN ONE ACT)

By Louise Saunders

SCENE: "Wave Crest." A cottage rented by CROMWELL PETRIE, *America's most distinguished actor, who is "resting after an arduous season," etc., at Palm Beach. Although only a hotel cottage, it has quite an air of gaiety and comfort. There are deep lounges, artistically cushioned, and wide windows tastefully curtained.*

There are photographs on the mantelpiece and on the table. There are also books—Meredith, Kenneth Graham, Du Maurier, Stevenson, Wells, for no one appreciates a certain type of good book better than does CROMWELL PETRIE. *He luxuriates in it, lives it and dies a little death when it is finished. The attendants have been made clearly to understand that* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *books must follow him everywhere, that they must, as he travels from place to place, faithfully tag at his heels.*

DISCOVERED:—*When the curtain rises,* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *valet,* MADDOX, *is discovered lying on the lounge, smoking a cigarette; he is also reading a newspaper.*

MADDOX *is not at all of "the old faithful retainer" type, but a tall Englishman, dark and clean shaven. He is not always a "man." Sometimes he is given small parts in* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *Company, but he prefers being a man, an attitude which* CROMWELL PETRIE *can't understand at all.*

CROMWELL PETRIE *comes in through the wide doors at the back that give a glimpse of a spacious and airy hall. He is in flannels. He looks particularly well in flannels. There is an air of breeding about him, also there is something else indescribable. He has been fêted, he has been biographed, he has been honoured by kings, and better still, by queens. It has left its mark on him!*

MADDOX

(*Jumping up and extinguishing his cigarette.*) You've caught me, sir!

C. P.

So I see. However, you needn't think that I am elated about it. Frequent repetition has dulled all element of sport that the situation might have held. It is like catching a tame puppy.

MADDOX

I'm sorry, sir.

C. P.

(*Severely.*) Maddox, you must not smoke my cigarettes, particularly in the drawing-room. Do you understand?

MADDOX

You shouldn't leave such good ones around, sir.

C. P.

I gave you equally good ones for your own use to keep you from smoking mine.

MADDOX

(*Taking* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *hat and stick.*) Thank you, Mr. Petrie. (*Hopefully.*) Perhaps, if you should give me some superior ones for my own use—

C. P.

You're damned impertinent, Maddox, and I warn you I don't feel in the mood for it. Did anyone call?

MADDOX

Only some young women, sir.

C. P.

Young women! What did they want?

MADDOX

The usual thing, sir. They walked up and down several times, looking at the house and laughing. They seemed to be encouraging one another. Finally one of them came up the path and rang the bell. She asked for a collar button, sir.

C. P.

A collar button!

MADDOX

Yes, sir. A collar button, a scarf or something of that sort, she said, sir, that had belonged to you. It was *quite* the usual thing.

C. P.

You gave her a collar button, I hope?

MADDOX

I gave her one of mine, sir.

C. P.

(*Thoughtfully.*) Mmm—and that did just as well?

MADDOX

(*Nodding.*) Just as well, sir, since she didn't know.

C. P.

(*Somewhat relieved.*) Ah! she didn't know.

MADDOX

No, sir.

C. P.

And yet, after all, it is rather strange that pretty young girls should ask you for these little—er—articles from my wardrobe. Should value the collar buttons of a man with gray hair, who is "getting on," a man who has, in fact, been "on" for several years—value them above those of a good-looking young chap like you. Don't you think so?

MADDOX

(*With marked sincerity.*) I do, sir. I think it perfectly amazing, sir.

C. P.

Oh, you do, do you?

MADDOX

(*Putting down* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *hat and stick and coming forward.*) It's perverted nature, sir. That's what it is, and civilization is responsible for it.

C. P.

Civilization? Explain yourself, my dear Maddox.

MADDOX

Yes, sir. (*He clears his throat.*) Think of the birds, sir.

C. P.

I'm thinking of them.

MADDOX

Think of the young birds of the air, sir, as I said before, and the young animals—

C. P.

Of the forest.

MADDOX

Yes, sir, and the young—

C. P.

(*Impatiently.*) Bees of the apiary, fish of the streams. Well, after we have pondered on these juvenile quadrupeds and reptiles, what then?

MADDOX

I was about to say that it's youth with them, sir, and nothing more, whereas, in the case of the human race, it is fame attracts the young, or if not fame, riches, sir.

C. P.

Really, Maddox, how can this deeply philosophic nature of yours refuse the small parts that I offer you in my plays? I should think that it would jump at them, if natures—er—can jump.

MADDOX

I prefer being your man, Mr. Petrie. You see I've always been a man ever

since I was a boy, sir; not to speak of my uncle and cousins. It doesn't seem natural to be anything else.

C. P.

That's very interesting. I suppose no matter how gaily we dressed him, in the garb of Roman citizen, Venetian courtier, or what not, one's man would still remain a man for a' that. Perhaps that's what Burns was driving at. Do you think so, Maddox?

MADDOX

I'm very fond of Burns, sir.

C. P.

Are you *really*, Maddox? I can't stand him myself. All marked over with little stars so that you have to get the sense of the thing in the footnotes. Here's a poem for you, Maddox, that is shrouded deep in purple, regal purple. (*He takes a book out of his pocket and reads as only the great* CROMWELL PETRIE *can read.*)

"I have a rendezvous with death
At some disputed barricade
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple blossoms fill the air.
I have a rendezvous with death
When Spring brings back blue days—

(*He sees a letter on the table back of the lounge.*) Why didn't you tell me there was a letter from Mrs. Petrie? You scoundrel, Maddox—

MADDOX

You seemed a bit downhearted when you came in, sir. I didn't want to mention anything—unpleasant.

C. P.

(CROMWELL PETRIE *tears open the letter. He reads it, frowning, and clenches it in his hand.*)

MADDOX

(*Opening the drawer of the table.*) Here is your cheque book, sir, and pen and ink.

C. P.

(*Smiling in spite of himself.*) You are rather amusing, Maddox.

MADDOX

Thank you, sir.

C. P.

Mrs. Petrie's letters and my cheque book seem to be strangely connected in your mind. However, I won't write her immediately. She wants me to subscribe to the league for the preservation of something. I can't quite make it out. It looks like rolling stones, but, of course, it couldn't be rolling stones. The preservation of rolling stones—no, it doesn't sound right. I shall have to think it over. (CROMWELL PETRIE *has a talent for making queer little animals out of paper. He starts now to shape a dog, rather like a dachshund, out of Mrs. Petrie's letter.* MADDOX *takes up the hat and stick again.*) (*Fiercely.*) Why can't she leave me alone? Why, Maddox, *why?* (*He glares at* MADDOX.)

MADDOX

Are you making an observation, Mr. Petrie, or are you asking for my opinion?

C. P.

Your opinion? Of course, I don't want your opinion.

MADDOX

No, sir. (*He starts to go.*)

C. P.

Still, I shan't mind, if you care to—

MADDOX

(*Returning.*) Yes, sir. I think that the reason Mrs. Petrie won't let you alone is because you let her alone so much, sir, and the reason you let her alone is because she takes you seriously, sir.

C. P.

Takes me seriously?

MADDOX

You say things so beautifully, Mr. Petrie, so nobly, sir, that she thinks

you mean them, if you will excuse me for saying so.

C. P.

Nonsense, Maddox. That's enough. (CROMWELL PETRIE *busies himself again with the dachshund's tail.* MADDOX *leans against the table.*) You have things to do, I suppose?

MADDOX

You don't need me now, sir?

C. P.

I didn't need you before. (MADDOX *takes up the hat and stick again.*)

MADDOX

(*Looking out of the window.*) Here is another of them, Mr. Petrie.

C. P.

Another of what?

MADDOX

Young women, sir.

C. P.

Confound them, those people! They have no mental modesty. Have you a collar button handy?

MADDOX

No, sir, you see mine is pinned.

C. P.

You should keep a bowlful of them on the table. Tell her that I'm not at home.

MADDOX

Yes, sir. (MADDOX *can be heard in the hall.*) Mr. Petrie is not at home, Madam. (*Then there is a sudden, very marked change in* MADDOX'S *voice. He becomes quite, even eagerly, respectful.*) Oh, Miss Prentiss, I beg your pardon! For a moment I didn't recognize you. The light behind you was so strong. Mr. Petrie is in the drawing-room, Madam.

C. P.

(*Rising.*) Who the dickens!

MADDOX

(*At the door—very impressively.*) Miss Prentiss to see you, sir.

C. P.

Miss Prentiss? (*He glowers at* MADDOX.)

ESTHER PRENTISS

(*Outside.*) I'm afraid that you don't know me, Mr. Petrie. May I come in just the same? (*She appears at the door, lovely, in every sense of that radiant word, a creature of soft curves and perfume and colour, like, to use an old simile, but it is the best one, a flower, a single flower, frail petaled, and, I think, pink. Her hat is pink, anyway, and so are her cheeks and her sweater—or perhaps the cheeks are not. It is only a delicate something she has put on them that is pink. She does it very artistically at all events, if it is that.*)

MADDOX

(*On fire with desire to put* MR. PETRIE *in his place.*) Miss Esther Prentiss, sir.

C. P.

How do you do, Miss Esther Prentiss? (*He clearly doesn't know her. Then it dawns on him.*) Oh, *oh*, my dear fellow artist. Of course I know you! Have you just arrived at Palm Beach?

ESTHER

Just about arrived. This is the first sightseeing I have done.

MADDOX

(*Proudly.*) There were two pictures of Miss Prentiss in the *Times* Supplement last Sunday, Mr. Petrie, and only one of you, sir.

C. P.

Indeed! That shows the sound, good judgment of our press.

ESTHER

No, not of our press, Mr. Petrie, only of the *Times*. You see, there were two of you in the *Evening Post* supplement and only one of me. You appeal to the conservatives.

C. P.

Yes, the older one gets the more one appeals to the conservatives, I've noticed. That will do, Maddox.

(*Exit* MADDOX.)

ESTHER

Who is that nice boy?

C. P.

That is my man, by profession, an actor on the side. I'm afraid that his histrionic experiences have rather taken the edge off his good manners. He was perfect when I brought him over. Try this chair, Miss Prentiss. It's the only comfortable one in the cottage.

ESTHER

Thank you. (*Looking after* MADDOX.) He is, I suppose, what one might call a personable young man, extremely personable. Perhaps he is the youngest son of a great house, who has disgraced himself in some way. He looks so, don't you think so?

C. P.

He looks very much as if he might have disgraced himself. He tells me the truth, that's why I keep him, I suppose. Flattery is such a bore.

ESTHER

Do you think so? I like flattery and attention. Don't you enjoy walking through a crowd, sailing into a dead sea of silence and leaving a trail of whisper and comment as a steamer leaves a trail of foam? Oh! flattery is soothing. But I never believe it, never, never.

C. P.

You, fortunately, can believe it if you want to.

ESTHER

That was very nice of you. I think that it was nice of you. Was it?

C. P.

It was intended to be.

ESTHER

(*Dubiously.*) Thank you. (*There is a pause, then she turns to him.*) I've come to talk to you about something very important.

C. P.

Really? And I'm glad to be able to tell you how much I enjoyed your work in your play last year—er—what was it called—er—

ESTHER

"Everlasting Emma." She *was* everlasting. I thought I should never shake her off. Even now I'm living in dread that someone will revive the poor thing.

C. P.

Do you know, you've changed very much since I saw you then.

ESTHER

Oh, that's because I'm just beginning to *feel* pretty. It takes years of prettiness to feel pretty when one has been a plain child and, unless one feels pretty, to oneself there is no use in *being* it—it doesn't take, somehow. May I have a cigarette?

C. P.

I beg your pardon.

ESTHER

(*Determinedly.*) As I said before, I came here to ask you something, something of great importance—(*She hesitates.*) Can you guess why I smoke cigarettes when I hate them? That isn't the question of great importance, of course.

C. P.

Because you do it so prettily.

ESTHER

No, because I want to be known as a devilish person.

C. P.

Do you think that smoking cigarettes will give you that reputation?

ESTHER

It will help. Of course, it takes much longer to be thought devilish when one doesn't inhale.

C. P.

Why don't you inhale?

ESTHER

(*In a whisper, looking around.*) It chokes me.

C. P.

I'm sorry to be discouraging, but I'm afraid one has to be born devilish to manage it successfully.

ESTHER

Oh, don't say that! The critics are always writing about my naïveté, my ingenuousness, my unsophistication, I don't like it at all. As a matter of fact —(*She sits on the sofa and tucks her feet up under her*)—as a matter of fact, I long to be a vampire or something like that.

C. P.

There is nothing like that.

ESTHER

Don't you like vampires?

C. P.

I've never seen one—with charm, and a vampire without charm is like a lion without claws or teeth.

ESTHER

(*Delighted.*) An epigram! Do you know, I'm having a beautiful time with you. In a minute—(*She takes a long breath*)—in a minute I shall tell you what I came for.

C. P.

So am I. Don't hurry about it.

ESTHER

What I came for is so appalling, so—cataclysmic, if there is such a word, that I shrink from taking the plunge. I have trembled on the brink of asking you several times, then I ran away.

C. P.

I am beginning to be interested.

ESTHER

(*Looking about.*) These are not rooms, are they?

C. P.

It's one room. Rather a nice one, don't you think so?—view of the sea and all that.

ESTHER

No, I mean "rooms," you know, the kind they have in plays. Whenever one reads, scene-so-and-so's rooms, on the programme, one can feel sure that there is going to be a screen or a side door through which the heroine hurriedly conceals herself when her brother, dishevelled, menacing and suspicious, makes his entrance. I'm really much too comfortable to *think* of hurriedly concealing myself.

C. P.

(*Reassuringly.*) This is a house.

ESTHER

Oh, yes, that makes it perfectly all right, its being a house, doesn't it? Besides—(*Happily*)—I haven't any brother.

C. P.

Then the whole thing is perfectly respectable.

ESTHER

I might as well tell you now. It sticks in my throat. I had no idea that it would be so hard.

C. P.

My dear child, I should be only too happy to do anything for you in my power—

ESTHER

Don't be paternal, Mr. Petrie. It makes it harder. Oh, how can I say it! If I only could be sure—that you were one of our kind. I'm almost sure, but—

C. P.

(*With intense bitterness.*) Let's hope that I'm not any particular kind, Miss Prentiss. I've always considered myself rather unique, and it's a jolly good thing for Maddox's "human race" that I am unique. A round peg, wobbling about in this square hole of a world, trying to pretend that he fits it, like the others.

ESTHER

(*Solemnly.*) That's just the way I feel about it, Mr. Petrie. Isn't it wonderful! I didn't know anyone else—(*Earnestly.*) Do you know, I'm going to tell you something that I couldn't say to my dearest friend if I had one. I have always thought that the gods intended people like you and me to be sort of—smelters.

C. P.

Smelters! Do you really prefer them to pegs, my dear Miss Prentiss? They sound fairly disagreeable.

ESTHER

(*Very effectively.*) When I was a little girl my father owned a mine. I remember the way the men used to pour the ore into the smelters, just as they found it—the rock and the dirt and the gold and the dross, everything together. The smelter would shake it about and in some way that I don't understand would reject all that was useless and bad and leave the pure gold, the shining gold, alone. Through us, don't you see, sweep the loves, the hates, the envies, sympathies, the hypocrisies of other men and women. We smelt the gold out of it all.

C. P.

They kill our souls to fashion beautiful vessels out of them. That's better than yours, Miss Prentiss. Beautiful vessels from which they drink ecstasy and tears.

ESTHER

Yes, that *is* better than mine. (*Dreamily.*) Beautiful vessels from which they drink ecstasy and tears! It's wonderful! (*There is a pause. Then* ESTHER *bursts into sudden laughter, followed by* CROMWELL PETRIE.) That *was* utterly absurd of us, wasn't it?

C. P.

Yes, rather.

ESTHER

An outsider, hearing us express those soulful thoughts might well have imagined that we were most misunderstood, unhappy beings, whereas, as a matter of fact, we are extremely fortunate and perfectly content. Your technique is perfect, Mr. Petrie, and isn't it a relief not to have been taken seriously?

C. P.

(*Startled but amused.*) By Jove, it is! That's a strange thing.

ESTHER

What?

C. P.

Maddox was saying the same thing to me only a short while ago.

ESTHER

Was he really? How discerning of him! He must be a jewel.

C. P.

(*Doubtfully.*) I never thought of him as a jewel.

ESTHER

(*Springing up.*) Now, Mr. Petrie, I *will* put my proposition before you because I feel quite sure, after what you said about beautiful vessels and all that rot—excuse me, but it *was* silly, you admitted it—that you are what I call one of "our kind" and that you will understand perfectly. I felt *almost* sure this morning on the beach when I saw you take a piece of tinfoil out of your cigarette box and admire it.

C. P.

It *is* beautiful stuff, tinfoil.

ESTHER

(*Enthusiastically.*) Isn't it! Then you covered a penny with it, smoothing it down very carefully with your thumb so that the pattern would show through. You took as much care in the business of turning a copper cent into a silver one as the other kind would take in mending a motor car. It was that that gave me the courage to come here.

C. P.

Really, Miss Prentiss, how extraordinary! What is the plan?

ESTHER

Sit down and I'll put it before you. (*He sits on the lounge.*) (*She perches on the arm of the lounge facing him.*) You see, people, real people I mean, not our kind, make love to me.

C. P.

Of course.

ESTHER

And I like it rather, because it means so much to them. That's the devil of it. If I didn't like it it wouldn't matter.

C. P.

No, I don't suppose it could really bother one unless one liked it.

ESTHER

Exactly—these serious young men with nice eyes—Ah, how I dread them! Or rather how I dread myself, for they give me the cue to say such beautiful romantic things and some day—(*tragically*) some day, I shall find that I have gone too far and that I am *married* to one of them! Caged, bound, imprisoned for life! Oh, I must prevent that, I must.

C. P.

Would it necessarily mean—?

ESTHER

Of course it would. You know perfectly well that the only thing we care about, deep down in our hearts, the *only* thing is our work. We may play at making love and marrying and all that, but it doesn't really matter to us. Just now I've made a big success and I want to go on with it—naturally. I feel as a bird might who had just been allowed to use his wings. There are big unchartered realms to be discovered and I am capable of spoiling it all for myself, knocking the whole thing down by saying to someone those things that I can say so well, and—and a girl who really meant them probably couldn't say at all! There's irony for you! The kind of girl who really means them generally can't say them at all.

C. P.

What things, for instance?

ESTHER

Well, like this—(*She does it so tenderly that it catches at your throat to listen to her.*) My career! What's that to me now? I give it gladly as an offering to thank God for the blessedness that you have brought to me. Oh, my dear, how I love you, how I love you—All my hopes, my ambitions seem cold and lifeless to me compared to the perfect sweetness of giving them up for you. Take me, not a great actress any more, only a woman whose mind, whose heart, whose soul, is yours to do with as you will—I ask nothing else of the world than this—you, now and always, and perhaps some day, a little baby who bears your name. Heaven could hold no more! That sort of thing—I wish I could find my handkerchief. Will you lend me yours? Thank you. (ESTHER PRENTISS *is crying. The tears are rolling down her cheeks.*) Don't you see how that sort of thing would spoil the whole damn thing— (*Smiling.*) The damn thing being my career?

C. P.

I do, decidedly. Is there anyone in particular—?

ESTHER

No indeed, no one at all, although there are lots of them about to whom it would sound perfectly appropriate, you know, should I say it.

C. P.

It's rather a pity not to. After all, most women seem to feel that marriage is the only true state of grace. And it would make him, whoever he happened to be, very happy. That's something. Isn't it?

ESTHER

Nonsense, Mr. Petrie, you know perfectly well I could never make anyone happy—any more than you could. Many women have a strong talent for marriage just as one might possess a talent for anything else. Of course they think marriage the best thing for all women. (*Proudly.*) I know enough not to put a halo around my inclinations, the way

they do. I remember (*with studied effectiveness*) it was in Venice, when I was quite a little girl, that I first decided to be an actress. I bought a series of picture postcards of Duse in "Citta Morta" —I don't know the story, except that she is blind in it, and the postcards showed her groping her way fearfully through the bushes. She stumbles on the body of her sister. Even in those cheap pictures I could see the terrible chill dread of some near horror in her face. It was wonderful! I used to practise it in my bedroom at the hotel. I did it very well, too, and I was happy—happier than I had ever been in my life before. I had found myself, you see. I don't choose to lose myself again. Here is your handkerchief. Such a nice fine one! I cried four tears in it.

C. P.

I shall value it for that above all other handkerchiefs.

ESTHER

(*Suddenly.*) Mr. Petrie, I came to ask you—I wondered whether *you* would be willing.

C. P.

Willing? Willing to do what?

ESTHER

To save me from them, the serious young men. I wondered whether you would— (*She hesitates and plunges in*) would marry me, Mr. Petrie. (*There is a sensation,* MR. PETRIE *starts to speak.*) (*Hurriedly.*) No, wait a minute, don't say anything yet.

C. P.

But I—

ESTHER

No, no, don't say a word, *wait,* please —of course you think me frightfully presuming and I am, I suppose, but it would really be a great advantage to both of us, the kind of marriage I mean. You could say all sorts of clever, beautiful things that revealed the heights and depths of your nature and I would be appreciative, but I never would expect them to mean anything, and you would save me from jumping into one of the pitfalls that yawn all about me. Don't you think it would be delightful and we would both be free you know, quite free— (CROMWELL PETRIE *looks at* ESTHER PRENTISS *reflectively.*) (*He looks away, then back at her again.*)

C. P.

How do you know that it would save you from the pitfalls? "The eternal triangle" is an amusing situation, you know. You might think it interesting to develop it in a new way, just as an artistic experiment.

ESTHER

Oh, no, I'm not at all afraid of that because I have a conscience—Oh, as big as that—and it was made in New England. Of course. I might conceivably say to one of them—"I love you, dear, but we must never see each other again. I wouldn't hurt dear Cromwell Petrie for the world," or something of that sort. You wouldn't object to that, would you?

C. P.

Not particularly, except that it sounds as if you ought to have said "dear *old* Cromwell Petrie."

ESTHER

Will you?

C. P.

My dear Miss Prentiss, I can think of no arrangement more inspired, more absolutely perfect than the one you suggest. But I'm afraid that it is only one of those sad, unhappy "might have beens." There are drawbacks— There is one particular drawback. (*He takes* MRS. PETRIE'S *letter folded in the shape of a dachshund and balances it on his palm.*)

ESTHER

(*Enthusiastically.*) Oh, never mind. If *you* are willing. Throw the drawback overboard.

C. P.

That wouldn't be very gallant, would it, to throw her overboard. Poor draw-

back. She wouldn't understand, she would be quite bewildered. (*He looks ruefully at the dachshund.*)

ESTHER

She?

C. P.

I did it, the very thing you are dreading, a good many years ago. I let myself in for it and I couldn't get out. The victim of my own temperament, or say rather, the victim of my own love of the appropriate phrase.

ESTHER

Do you mean to say that you are married?

C. P.

Yes. To a most estimable drawback. A Daughter of the Revolution, a Colonial Dame, a President of this and that, who dislikes me intensely.

ESTHER

(*Sinking down on the sofa.*) But you—you are so well known! How strange that I never—

C. P.

(*Slightly hurt.*) Haven't you seen the pictures in the papers? "Cromwell Petrie's house from the tennis court," "Cromwell Petrie's tennis court from the house," and so on—she's always in them.

ESTHER

Oh, I'm in despair! (*Effectively.*) Margaret Gautier's terrible cry, "Je ve veux pas mourir"—you know that cry—means for me "I don't want to marry," but I shall have to, just as "Camille" had to die. The fates are against me. They spoil everything.

C. P.

I'm sorry.

ESTHER

(*Indignantly.*) How did you get—roped in?

C. P.

She was a widow with a small child, Betty. One time we were sitting by a lake somewhere in the moonlight—ridiculous time for a child to be up—and Betty said to me before her Mother, "Why does mother love you so much, Mr. Petrie?"

ESTHER

And what did you say?

C. P.

I lifted her on my knee, stroked her curls and said, "Don't you remember, Betty dearest, the reason why the lamb loved Mary so? Don't you know

"'Why does the lamb love Mary so?'
The children all did cry;
''Cause Mary loves the lamb, you know,'
The teacher did reply."

Of course, that clinched it. It was irretrievable!

ESTHER

(*Laughing in spite of herself.*) How—delicious!

C. P.

They were manufactured curls, I found out afterward, too!

ESTHER

That does cheapen the whole thing awfully, doesn't it? (*She rises.*) Well, I've proposed to you and been refused! Mercy (*in horror*), whatever would my mother say to that—if I had a mother!

C. P.

Don't let's trouble to puzzle it out.

ESTHER

Good-bye, Mr. Petrie, I shall leave Palm Beach, run away from them—perhaps to a farm, somewhere—I want to think of nothing but my work. Lose myself in it, immerse myself in it like a—a—what immerses itself?

C. P.

(*Thinking hard.*) A duck?

ESTHER

Oh no, deeper than that—a *fish*. Immerse myself in it like a fish, will do, though it is far from perfect. Miller says that I may play Juliet, next winter.

C. P.

I shall come to admire.

MADDOX

(*Appearing.*) Did you ring, Mr. Petrie?

C. P.

No. Find Miss Prentiss a chair.

ESTHER

I should prefer to walk, really.

MADDOX

There is one here, Miss Prentiss. I engaged him a few minutes ago, thinking that you might need him. (MADDOX *goes out.*)

ESTHER

He has such nice manners, that boy. I'm sure that there is a mystery about him. You will find out some day that he has a brother—an elder brother, who will die and then Maddox will inherit the title. You'll see.

C. P.

Let me see you to your chair.

ESTHER

Oh, no, thanks, don't trouble. (*She goes toward the door, then returns.*) Mr. Petrie, here is a gardenia to help you remember me. (*She takes it from her belt.*) Will you keep it—always!

C. P.

For ever—(*he puts it to his lips*) and when I look at it, I shall think—

"Of all sad words, of tongue or pen
The saddest are these—"

ESTHER

(*Reflectively.*) It might have *ben.* Yes, that's true (*she laughs and takes his arm*), but then if we use a more cultured pronunciation—

Happy is he whose eyes were keen
Enough to avoid what might have *been,*

it seems just as wise. Nothing sounds as true, Mr. Petrie, as a falsehood, beautifully expressed.

MADDOX

(*At the door.*) There is a gentleman waiting for Miss Prentiss. (*Impressively.*) Captain Sir Arthur Poole-Carey, sir.

ESTHER

Captain Sir Arthur Poole-Carey. A pitfall! There is a pitfall waiting out there! (*She runs to* MR. PETRIE *as if for protection.*) Save me!

C. P.

Send him away.

ESTHER

Oh yes, that's it—tell him to go away, Maddox.

MADDOX

Yes, Miss Prentiss—

ESTHER

No, wait a minute. (*Pleadingly.*) Oh, he is so nice, Mr. Petrie, so tall and slender and serious and he has such a dear little tiny moustache right there! He calls me "la Belle Dame Sans Merci"—La Belle Dame Sans Merci, who has found a soul. Isn't it sweet of him to think I am like that—I'm not a bit like that really. (*She starts to go.*) I'll walk home with him.

C. P.

(*Warningly.*) Remember Juliet!

ESTHER

(*She stops.*) Oh, yes—Juliet. Bother Juliet! Don't look so solemn, you dear old thing. I'm "la Belle Dame Sans Merci" to-day. Just to-day.

"And then he closed her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four!"

(*She laughs and is off.*)

(CROMWELL PETRIE *balances a paper-cutter on one finger, thoughtfully.*)

C. P.

(*Calling.*) Maddox—

MADDOX

(*At the door.*) Yes, Mr. Petrie?

C. P.

Have you any brothers?

MADDOX

Yes, Mr. Petrie, one, sir.

C. P.

Younger than you, I suppose—

MADDOX

No, sir, older, fortunately for me.

C. P.

Why "fortunately for you"?

MADDOX

Because he inherited, sir—

C. P.

Inherited! By Jove! She's right!

MADDOX

Yes, sir. He inherited my father's plumbing business, sir. I shouldn't have made a good plumber. I'm too subtle, sir.

C. P.

A subtle plumber— *Good heavens!* Practical people, Maddox, they are the ones who count. The kind of people who make steel rails, the kind of people who know what to do when one has overturned a cup of tea! (*He dashes the gardenia in the scrap basket.*)

MADDOX

True, sir.

C. P.

(*Furiously.*) True, how do you know that it is true! Nothing sounds as true as a falsehood, beautifully expressed. (*He smiles slowly.*) Huh, rather good, that! I must make use of it.

[CURTAIN.]

MOOD

By Helen Underwood Hoyt

SOFTLY the night sings under the still trees;
A friend has sent me words of dust and fire,
Whose road goes into shadow places. These
Few pages patterned with ink are all desire,
All that one wishes, all that no one knows—
Youth puzzled with life; youth crying out, youth dumb.
I read, I hear the sounds where the wind goes—
I think of how like winds moods go and come
And twist our souls to swaying, mad delight,
Or leave them trembling, lonely, heavy with night.

MANY a man is afraid to be attentive to his wife in public. People will think that he is trying to win her back from some other man.

A WISE husband is one who neither dines with girls from the "Follies" nor breakfasts with his wife.

TWO CHAIRS

By Griffis Marsden

I

JOHN TEMPLE had not yet read his programme. Paula was fanning herself with it. She fluttered it lazily, and held it against her lips as a screen for her occasional remarks and her not infrequent yawns.

To-night, as always at a concert, she yawned a great deal more than she talked. She had given one fleeting glance toward the programme before she pre-empted it as a fan.

"Oh, Lord!" she had drawled hopelessly, "it's another long one."

John, glancing down at her smooth shoulder and bored pink face, wondered why he had bought tickets. Probably from habit. But, he reflected, there had always been a decent streak in him that yearned toward music, and he hated going alone. It made him feel self-conscious and too acutely aware of his neighbours. Of course, Paula obviously appeared to better advantage at a comedy or a dance; but when all was said she did fairly well even here. She sat beside him without fidgeting, her tightly gloved hands lying quietly in her lap, and endured the evening passively. She always slipped on her hat before the last note had died away, but if John wanted to wait for the encore she assented with no more ill-natured protest than another yawn. Paula seemed completely married at a concert. People guessed that she had been John's wife for at least five years.

John leaned back in his seat and enjoyed the pleasant, familiar feeling that always crept over him in such a place. There was probably not one creature in the theatre that he knew save Paula, there beside him. At home—he still thought of the other city as home—he would have been bowing constantly to Rae's friends or his own; and afterwards he could not have hoped to get through the foyer in less than fifteen or twenty minutes. Everyone stopped them and talked. Some were merely eager to share enthusiasm, but there was always a larger number in haste to get Rae's verdict before venturing their own.

John glanced down at the smooth head beside him and smiled indulgently. No one would trouble to ask Paula's opinion about Cortot's technique, or the timbre of Galli-Curci's voice.

Here, it was only the familiar feeling of evening dress and pleasant expectancy, the lights and faint scents, the rustle of women's gowns and the surging hum of voices that made John feel at home. He folded his arms and sighed. He had gone to so many concerts that once he had thought he could never endure another. But here he was, still at it.

Madame Clamari came on the stage and swept a half dozen complacent bows toward the roar of applause. Even Paula joined for a few brief seconds before she glanced quickly at her gloves and dropped her hands to her lap. John knew that she would not lift them again in the course of the evening unless it was to pat her hair. She never did.

He had speculated fruitlessly as to her reason for clapping at first. Perhaps, in her soul, if she had one down under all that georgette, there was a yearning, eager hope of finding the real artiste at last, a hope that was always doomed to disappointment. John smiled at the notion; it amused him hugely. As a matter of fact, Paula greeted each performer with apparently spontaneous applause merely to convince those

seated near her that she had heard the creature before. It was perfectly simple.

Madame Clamari gazed insolently over her audience until the rustling and the fluttering and the murmuring ceased, and then nodded brightly to the slim young man at the piano.

Paula leaned against John's shoulder and spoke under cover of the opening chords.

"Will you look at her gown!" she drawled. "She's going to burst clear out of the thing at the top."

John bent his head politely and gave a slight, dutiful laugh. It was his invariable custom.

Even when Madame Clamari began he did not reach for the programme. She sang "In Questa Tomba," and he thought it badly suited to her voice. John could sing after a fashion himself. Rae had even written a song for him once, a tender, whimsical little love song that he had been persuaded to sing at one of their "evenings." He could still remember the pride and embarrassment that he felt as he stood in the curve of the piano and looked across the rack at Rae, playing his accompaniment and watching him with a faint smile. He could remember, too, the way the blood surged to his face when the delighted guests crowded around them later.

John had vaguely missed their piano in the last two years. Paula had asked for a phonograph; and besides, he didn't play himself. Rather a pity, too. Rae had tried to teach him once. That had been in the first year of their marriage, but at times he fancied he could still feel the touch of her hands against his, trying to curve his stubborn fingers.

"It's no use," he had been in the habit of saying, moving over on the seat; "you play it." And Rae had usually played it, with a half smile, and his arm around her waist.

She had suggested the divorce with that same half smile.

"It makes no difference to me, of course, but I should think you'd rather," she had said.

John was not sure that he'd rather; but Rae had obviously expected it and ultimately done it, with a great deal of calm grace.

Madame Clamari began another song, an unfamiliar song, and John cautiously pulled the programme from between Paula's unprotesting fingers. She was right; it was a long one. His eye travelled swiftly down through the inevitable arias, the Italian folk songs and modern French ballads. There were so many of the latter that he had to turn a page to find the last group. In English, as he had suspected.

John read the titles through with mild interest. "Songs From an Empty House," they were called, and there were four of them. "The firelight flickers against the shades," he read, and "A dull earth and a leaden sky." "Lonely days, empty days," they went on; and lastly, "When I light my candle and go upstairs."

"Awfully brooding," he remarked to himself, and looked for the author. Rae Craig Tully, the name was printed across the page; and something in or near John's heart turned over.

With her second group, Madame Clamari emerged from the original chill of her manner, and allowed her glorious voice to thrill through the auditorium.

"They're only songs—just songs," John kept mumbling to himself. "And Rae has written songs before. Rae was always writing songs."

The theatre broke into a feverish applause, and John looked about him vaguely.

"They're just songs," he said again.

"Lord, it's hot!" complained Paula. "Where's that programme?"

"I've dropped it," he said with difficulty, and crushed it to a ball in the palm of his hand.

"Lungi dal caro bene," sang Madame Clamari; and with the refrain John repeated to himself, "Rae was always writing songs."

And one who was always writing songs would in time come to write songs of empty days and even of empty houses, would she not?—of firelight

against the blinds, and flickering candles. Of leaden skies—Rae was always writing songs.

And Madame Clamari sang modern French ballads to two ears that were deaf.

"*Les donneurs de sérénades*," she caroled, with a sidewise glance across the footlights.

"They will just be ordinary songs. The names won't mean what they seem to mean," John told himself, while the audience whispered in delight that Debussy had certainly done one charming thing when he wrote "Mandoline."

Madame Clamari finished her French songs and her little French encore, and retired. Paula sighed, and yawned, and tapped her open mouth with her white gloved fingers. John wiped the palms of his hands and moistened his lips in terror.

"They'll just be ordinary songs," he said.

But with the first notes, John knew they were not just ordinary songs. Something had happened to Rae. The ghost of her old peculiar manner was there, but the graceful amusement of her early songs was quite gone, and in its place was something that seemed to tear John's heart out and lay it there beside her own, fluttering across the keys and through the golden cadences of Madame Clamari's voice.

Madame Clamari was just a fat singer, an over-fed artiste with an exquisite voice, singing four heartbroken songs to a hushed audience. But John Temple saw and heard Rae, calling only to him across the footlights. Calling to him of firelight that flickered against the shades and across the sewing in her lap, touching his hands, his book, her slippers stretched to the blaze. Rae, who had sung before of moonlight, or starlight, or flaming, multi-coloured carnival light. John closed his hands carefully on the arms of his chair. He was in a theatre, with Paula beside him and a curious world all around.

Then, when he believed that his head was clear once more, he heard Rae singing again—through the lips of a fat artiste and the fingers of a pale young man—singing of a sky that was leaden and an earth that was dull because *he* was not there. Rae, who at the last had given him a half smile and a limp hand in farewell!

And while he felt that, though the skies fell, he must rise up and answer her, she sang again of lonely, empty days, with a tortured cry underneath the words. And his heart froze with fear at what he must have done to her—little, aloof, self-sufficient Rae!

When finally she sang of lighting her candle and going upstairs—just a little song, four lines of wistful tenderness—John closed his eyes and groaned aloud.

With amazing promptness Paula put on her hat.

"Say, are you sick?" she inquired, and nudged John sharply with an elbow. Instantly reassured by a muttered dissent, she extracted a powder puff from some secret recess and passed it thoroughly and slowly across her face, her eyes travelling calmly over the auditorium.

The audience was hysterical in its insistence that Madame Clamari sing again. She reappeared many times and bowed, and received more flowers with a little cry of surprise, and dragged the pale youth out with her to bow again, and threw a coquettish kiss back over her shoulder, and finally, after an interminable suspense, came back to the piano, the pale youth bearing music in her wake, and the theatre growing thunderous with applause. And John wished to God that the people between him and the aisle would get up and let him out.

"I will seeng for you," said Madame Clamari, smiling and patting her lips with her handkerchief, "another of these leetle 'songs from an empty house' that you seem to like so much. Heartbreak songs, I call them. Eet call eetself, thees one, 'I in My Chair and You in Yours,' and I think eet ees very lofely."

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seated near her that she had heard the creature before. It was perfectly simple.

Madame Clamari gazed insolently over her audience until the rustling and the fluttering and the murmuring ceased, and then nodded brightly to the slim young man at the piano.

Paula leaned against John's shoulder and spoke under cover of the opening chords.

"Will you look at her gown!" she drawled. "She's going to burst clear out of the thing at the top."

John bent his head politely and gave a slight, dutiful laugh. It was his invariable custom.

Even when Madame Clamari began he did not reach for the programme. She sang "In Questa Tomba," and he thought it badly suited to her voice. John could sing after a fashion himself. Rae had even written a song for him once, a tender, whimsical little love song that he had been persuaded to sing at one of their "evenings." He could still remember the pride and embarrassment that he felt as he stood in the curve of the piano and looked across the rack at Rae, playing his accompaniment and watching him with a faint smile. He could remember, too, the way the blood surged to his face when the delighted guests crowded around them later.

John had vaguely missed their piano in the last two years. Paula had asked for a phonograph; and besides, he didn't play himself. Rather a pity, too. Rae had tried to teach him once. That had been in the first year of their marriage, but at times he fancied he could still feel the touch of her hands against his, trying to curve his stubborn fingers.

"It's no use," he had been in the habit of saying, moving over on the seat; "you play it." And Rae had usually played it, with a half smile, and his arm around her waist.

She had suggested the divorce with that same half smile.

"It makes no difference to me, of course, but I should think you'd rather," she had said.

John was not sure that he'd rather; but Rae had obviously expected it and ultimately done it, with a great deal of calm grace.

Madame Clamari began another song, an unfamiliar song, and John cautiously pulled the programme from between Paula's unprotesting fingers. She was right; it was a long one. His eye travelled swiftly down through the inevitable arias, the Italian folk songs and modern French ballads. There were so many of the latter that he had to turn a page to find the last group. In English, as he had suspected.

John read the titles through with mild interest. "Songs From an Empty House," they were called, and there were four of them. "The firelight flickers against the shades," he read, and "A dull earth and a leaden sky." "Lonely days, empty days," they went on; and lastly, "When I light my candle and go upstairs."

"Awfully brooding," he remarked to himself, and looked for the author. Rae Craig Tully, the name was printed across the page; and something in or near John's heart turned over.

With her second group, Madame Clamari emerged from the original chill of her manner, and allowed her glorious voice to thrill through the auditorium.

"They're only songs—just songs," John kept mumbling to himself. "And Rae has written songs before. Rae was always writing songs."

The theatre broke into a feverish applause, and John looked about him vaguely.

"They're just songs," he said again.

"Lord, it's hot!" complained Paula. "Where's that programme?"

"I've dropped it," he said with difficulty, and crushed it to a ball in the palm of his hand.

"Lungi dal caro bene," sang Madame Clamari; and with the refrain John repeated to himself, "Rae was always writing songs."

And one who was always writing songs would in time come to write songs of empty days and even of empty houses, would she not?—of firelight

against the blinds, and flickering candles. Of leaden skies—Rae was always writing songs.

And Madame Clamari sang modern French ballads to two ears that were deaf.

"*Les donneurs de sérénades*," she caroled, with a sidewise glance across the footlights.

"They will just be ordinary songs. The names won't mean what they seem to mean," John told himself, while the audience whispered in delight that Debussy had certainly done one charming thing when he wrote "Mandoline."

Madame Clamari finished her French songs and her little French encore, and retired. Paula sighed, and yawned, and tapped her open mouth with her white gloved fingers. John wiped the palms of his hands and moistened his lips in terror.

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the saddest little song of all, for it crowded into two tiny verses all the happiness, and intimacy, and joy of what might have been.

They got out slowly, wedged midway in the jabbering crowd.

Paula sighed contentedly when they reached the pavement.

"It certainly was hot in there," she said, and slipped her hand through John's arm. She sauntered slowly beside him, humming a fox-trot under her breath and swaying slightly to it as she walked.

"It's a peach of a night," she said, her spirits rising obviously with each step in the cold air. "Let's go over to Chariton's. I'm crazy to dance after sitting still so long."

"Not to-night," John said curtly, and she acquiesced with a shrug.

He put her in their motor car and sat huddled in his corner without speaking. There was no use trying to think or feel until he had got Paula safely home.

"Believe me, you're the gay boy to-night," she said, but without apparent resentment.

He left her at the elevator.

"I'm not coming up just yet," he said. "Rotten headache. Suppose I'd better stay out in the air."

"Surely; that's all right," she said, and stifled a recurrent yawn before she turned to joke with the elevator boy.

II

Fog was dripping steadily from the trees in the park when John found a bench. He had discovered that after all he must sit down to think. His mind was merely a dull blur of misery while he walked.

Rae in her chair and he in his, with the lamp between them and the fire sputtering on the hearth! And he had shrugged his shoulders at the fire, and turned out the light, and gone to dawdle away his evenings over a café table, listening to Paula Barney drawl nasal stupidities above the cheap whine of the music. Turned out the light so often that it finally stayed out; neglected the fire until it died down to nothing; listened to the nasal drawl and the cheap whine until Rae's clear, amused voice only jangled against his nerves and he would cry out:

"God, why couldn't I have married a woman that understood me!"

Not that he had pretended, even then, that Paula Barney did. But with Paula there were certain compensations.

Now, huddled on his park bench like any forlorn tramp, John shuddered at the memory of the morning that had ended things for them. It was a Sunday morning-after, and he was snarling over his solitary breakfast when Rae came into the dining-room. She sat down casually on the arm of her chair and regarded him speculatively across the table. He could see her small head now, with the black braids wound tightly around it.

"You're not looking very fit, John," she had said. "This business of trying to live with me and—court Miss Barney at the same time is a bit too much, is it not? Why bother to keep it up?—the living with me, I mean."

He remembered the incredulous anger with which he had stared at her. That his wife should view so calmly this great deflection in his life, the thing that had made him storm up and down in his office and lie awake at night for weeks! Rae had never mentioned Paula Barney before. That she should do it now without even the flutter of an eyelash!

"It would be much less expensive, you know," she went on, "if you should arrange things definitely now. I have quite enough from Uncle Craig's property; you wouldn't need to give my affairs a second thought. And surely everything could be made much pleasanter for Miss Barney. I should think her position would be most uncomfortable with things as they are."

John had risen to his feet and slung his grapefruit to the floor in fury.

"That is the way you feel about it, is it?" he had shouted at her across the table. "Then it's no wonder I'm half

crazy to get out of this house and find someone that has some heart in her."

He had stopped with the vague hope that she would break out in swift surprise, and with her deft hands reshape the situation for them both. But after a quiet moment she had merely dropped her eyes to her cuffs, small white organdy cuffs that ruffled against the cool blue of her gown.

He went on, with a bitter, angry disappointment. "And let me tell you now that if you had any warmth or human feeling about you, or had ever been willing to come down off that amused, aloof pedestal of yours, this thing would never have happened."

Rae had regarded him with wide, candid eyes.

"Why, John, you speak as if it were a calamity," she said.

"Calamity!" he roared. "Good God, what do *you* call it? I suppose next you'll be telling me that the arrangement will be 'very much pleasanter' for *you!*"

Rae was looking at the overturned grapefruit on the floor, and he had always remembered the odd expression that flickered across her face at his words.

"No, I shan't tell you that, John," she said.

"More damned subtlety," he had thought to himself.

But the picture of the limp, yellow rind and the sugary juice spattered against the wall had always remained the most obnoxious spot in his memory.

In less than an hour he had gone to Rae's sitting-room to apologize. She had lifted her head and dropped her hands from the piano long enough to say pleasantly:

"Why, that is quite all right, John. I shouldn't have bothered you until you were through breakfast, anyway."

His temper had very nearly flamed afresh. If only she would forget herself and stop treating him as if he were the least intimate and most esteemed of all her acquaintances!

And yet even at the time he had remembered a very different Rae. An intense creature she had been once, full of odd changes of mood, and quick, ardent confidences. He had lived in a sort of awed and rosy pride that this fervour was all for him. But after marriage Rae had quieted and chilled, strangely and very steadily. Chilled until he almost forgot that she had ever been anything but a piece of graceful ice. Quieted until he had striven furtively for anything, even to make her angry.

Well, thank heaven, there was nothing baffling nor finely pointed about Paula Barney. She was just as obvious as her pink finger-nails and her marceled hair. Until to-night, John's acquittal of himself had been without flaw.

Now, with his arms thrown across the back of the bench and his face buried against his sleeve, he shivered with grief and shame. Now, when it was too late, and he had flung Rae's heart aside as ruthlessly as the grapefruit rind, he had heard her calling to him, across two years and three thousand miles; calling through the keys of a piano and the tones of a fat woman's voice; calling so yearningly that every lonely, wistful note of the five songs seemed still to beat against his ears.

He had sold his birthright, and the mess of pottage had grown nauseous in an hour.

The fog was still dripping when he got up with sudden resolution. Perhaps, after all, it was *not* too late. Perhaps it was never really too late. Come what might, he would not let it be. He had married Paula, but he had also married Rae; and the bond, at the first effort, had proved easy to break.

Paula sat blinking in the bright light of the sitting-room while he told her. John stood beside the table, the damp collar of his overcoat still turned up against his neck. Paula's taste in furniture ran to ornamentation, and he felt unwilling to trust his shaking length to any of the chairs the room afforded.

She heard him through, her chin sagging slowly with amazement. Later, she looked around the room furtively,

in search of words to express the consternation and helpless anger flickering behind her usually placid eyes.

"Well," she stuttered at last, "you certainly have got your nerve. You certainly must think you're the one original charmer. As for me, all I've got to say—"

Even to Paula herself the inadequacy of her words became apparent. She rose and pulled her dressing gown closer about her. At the door she turned and spoke again.

"And if your little saint wants you as bad as all that," she said, her rather full lower lip twisted sidewise over the words, "why believe me she can have you. Believe me, you're not such a prize."

III

JOHN TEMPLE went in by the break in the hedge. He had no particular wish for stealth, but the formal entrance on the avenue had always wasted a hundred steps or more. Besides, the break in the hedge was on the side of the house where Rae's light shone out against the trees. He remembered, too, that he had always liked the crisp smell of the cypress.

He examined the quiet house, more familiar now than on the day he had left it. Now, the two years in New York with Paula and the phonograph seemed merely a bad, swift dream.

The same lights were burning that had always burned when John came home at night; a dim one in the front hall, a vague flicker somewhere back in the servants' quarters, a warm glow from Rae's sitting-room upstairs. John listened for the piano, and smiled with unconscious satisfaction when he failed to hear it. A Rae sitting by the fire seemed somehow more accessible. And the key to the front door had never left his key ring. He could go up quietly and familiarly as of old.

For a second, as he hesitated outside Rae's door, the thought did flash across his mind that he was doing a wild, an unprecedented thing. But a flooding sense of inevitability reassured him. The door was shut, and he rapped lightly with his knuckles.

"Come." Rae's voice, clear and slightly startled, reached him after a moment through the panels.

She sat in her broad wicker chair beside the fire, her Chinese slippers stretched out comfortably on the rug.

"John!" she cried, and held out both her hands.

As he took them and stood looking down at her, John's confidence receded in a wave. A spontaneously cordial Rae was not what he had expected. But he found himself trying to tell her everything at once, in awkward, jumbled phrases—not gracefully nor eloquently, as he had planned during the long trip West.

"And you say that Madame Clamari sang a group of my songs? Why, how flattering!" Rae spoke evenly when he paused. "Did they take well? I should be so interested to know."

John stepped back, horrified. He strove to unburden his heart, and succeeded only in interesting her in the success of her songs. He turned away blindly, his disappointment acute.

"Sit down, John." There was a gentler note in Rae's voice. "Pull up your chair and tell me about it."

He dragged the huge thing forward automatically, his mind a blur of conflicting thoughts. Rae's five songs had cut into his consciousness with the sharp clearness of a revelation. In a flash every stupidity, every gross mistake of his had been disclosed. A thousand baffling words of Rae's were suddenly explained. Her reserve had appeared as a sort of shining armour, a shield against the crass brutality of his neglect. Now, face to face with Rae again, she was as aloof, as baffling, as inaccessible as ever. He dropped down hopelessly among the worn leather cushions.

Then the very familiarity of the chair, the well-remembered comfort of its broad back, made him sit forward with an incredulous start. This chair had occupied no inconsiderable place

in their story. They had been married only a month when Rae had dragged him into her sitting-room one evening and shown it to him.

"There, Mr. Husband," she had cried gayly, "see what I have done for you! You were so enamoured of this hideous thing in the shop the other day that I secured it secretly at—oh, infinite cost—and see, I have installed it right here beside my table to coax you into staying home with me of nights. There! you can never pretend now that I do not love you when I am willing to put this impossible chair in the middle of my lovely, lovely room!"

And, in fact, it had looked incongruous beside Rae's wicker and chintz. Two years later he had stumbled over this same chair in the library downstairs, and that evening he had first taken Paula Barney out to dinner.

Now, Rae had voluntarily restored it to its old place, had kept it there, honoured, through the years of his absence. In a moment he was on his knees beside her chair, his arms gripped tightly around her and his forehead pressed against her sleeve.

"Rae," he whispered, "I've been so blind! I thought you didn't care, that nothing mattered to you except your piano and the concerts you went to. Oh, I've been such a fool! Until I heard your songs that night I never guessed that you could miss me, or dream about our evenings here together by the fire. If you had ever once let me see! Don't you know that nothing could have dragged me away if I had known? You wrote a song—'I in My Chair and You in Yours,' you called it, and you have kept my chair here beside yours all the time. And I never knew; I never guessed."

He stopped and looked up because Rae had grown so suddenly quiet in his arms. She was looking steadily at the fire, and at sight of her face John released her and drew back

"Yes, John," she said calmly, "I have kept that chair here for over a year and a half now. It jars no more rudely in my room than you did in my life. I couldn't help the latter misfortune; I have learned to make use of the former. . . . You are uncomfortable there, John. Won't you sit in your old chair while I explain—or do you care to have an explanation?"

She waited until he rose stiffly and sat again in his chair by the hearth. She was still watching the fire, and he saw how little she had changed, how unbelievably the same she was—the same fine, slight hands, the same erect head and quiet lips.

"The reef that wrecked our little bark, John," she smiled at the worn-out words, "was not the fact that I failed to keep your love, but rather that you failed to keep mine. I stopped first. Didn't you know that? It has been a very long time since I loved you, John. I have never blamed you with your 'desertion,' for I always knew you went only because I really didn't care any longer about keeping you. Forgive me, but you didn't seem quite worth keeping."

She was looking at him speculatively now.

"As to the songs—I sent them East without even a trial hearing here, because I was afraid that my friends might misunderstand; but I never dreamed that *you* could be deceived. You see, I have had so much time to think; and as I have sat here, night after night alone, it has been so easy to realize just how I should have felt if I *had* missed you. Sometimes, John, I felt that really missing you would be the greatest luxury that life could offer. And all these imaginings made such really lovely songs—so much better than any I had ever written before. I am not surprised that Clamari used them on her programme."

John stared at her unbelievingly, and she smiled.

"Are you shocked? Why John, surely you don't condemn an artist to portray only his own heart throbs! That would be horrible. Didn't you know before that those are the things we *don't* sing about? 'I in My Chair and You in Yours.' I believe you

spoke of that song specially. It *is* charming, and I wrote it so happily! But that was because I knew the width of the continent was between them, those chairs."

She was staring again at the fire, and another smile curved the corners of her mouth.

"You are wondering, I suppose, why I have kept that old relic of yours up here. Penelope had her spinning, but the sight of your chair has been all that I needed to keep me from matrimony. I brought it out of the library and put it back up here as a symbol and a warning. And I shall keep it until I am quite ugly and middle-aged and safe. . . ."

He was standing, and she rose also.

Every detail of the room was clear to John, though he looked only at her. Her work-basket was still lying in the window seat, her music scattered across the rack. The squat lamp on the table had the same silken shade, her gown was of the coral tint that she had always loved.

Suddenly he grasped her wrists roughly. The thought flashed through his mind that perhaps Rae was one of those women who bend only when swept off their feet, who thrill secretly to mastery.

"You know that I love you," he said savagely, "that I have always loved you. You know that I shall never love anyone else. I have been a blind fool, and you are punishing me now. You know that you have spoiled Paula Barney for me, that since seeing you once more I can never look at her again. I love you, yet you have robbed me of everything," and he shook her.

She looked at him so quietly that his hands dropped again to his sides.

"I'm sorry," she said.

At the outer door he turned again, for Rae had followed him to the head of the stairs, and a formless hope still zig-zagged through his misery. One hand rested on the newel post, and she was regarding him again with a slight half smile.

"You in your chair and I in mine, John," she said pleasantly. "I do hope you are happy in yours. As for mine —ah, you don't know how comfortable I am in it!"

PSEUDONYM

By Muriel Safford

WHO blows this fierce horn of sun?
Who croons the stars?
They name the musician God;
I know!
It is an assumed name—
Too small for Him who owns the Universe.

IT is easy to know and do right. When in doubt, simply do whatever you least want to do.

STRONGER THAN THE MIGHTY

By Virginia Terhune Van de Water

I

IF my wife ever cried during the first year of our married life, I did not know it. Later, she acquired the habit of facile weeping. Yet she was so gentle that I felt I ought not to betray signs of the exasperation caused by her tears.

While we were engaged, and for a year after our marriage, Molly was an ideal companion—fond of pleasure, in love with life and with me.

During the months before our baby came she maintained her calm placidity. I used to compliment her on this. I remembered that before the birth of my sister's child the prospective mother had been exacting and fretful. Molly was not. She said she was too happy to be cross. I am sure she spoke the truth.

I never saw her depressed until a few days prior to her return from the hospital in which our child was born. Then she confessed to me with quivering lips that she was "homesick and dreadfully blue."

"I want to get back home," she quavered. "Can't it be arranged? I never knew such a deadly dull place as this is."

Her room was sunny and she had a nurse who was the soul of cheer. Yet Molly's pleading eyes and unsteady tones moved me to swift compassion.

"If it can be arranged you shall come home, darling," I promised.

I sought the physician who had her case in charge. He listened to me patiently.

"I would prefer that Mrs. Armstrong stayed here longer," he admitted. "Yet as she is so eager to leave, she may go—always provided you take her in a private ambulance and have a trained nurse for the first month she is at home."

All this meant more expense than I had reckoned on, yet I decided to indulge poor little Molly in her wish. She seemed so pathetic and appealing in her homesickness.

She was very happy at being back in our pretty apartment, and talked delicious nonsense to her baby about the good times ahead of us three.

"She is like a lovely child," the nurse told me. "I never saw a gentler creature."

People always loved Molly. Her nurse was no exception.

Perhaps the patient left the hospital too soon, for she had been with me for less than a week when she had a relapse, and for several days we were very anxious about her. She was on the high-road to recovery when the baby was seized with convulsions and died.

It was all so sudden that the young mother—now able to sit up in an easy chair in her room—was absolutely unprepared for the blow. To me fell the agony of breaking the news to her.

Then it was that I saw in her eyes a look that I shall never forget. I think that look has been stamped upon my brain.

The doctor, waiting in our little living room, had warned me not to keep Molly in suspense by telling her the sad news by degrees.

"What they call preparation for bad tidings is sheer cruelty," he declared. "If one must break news—break it quickly. The shock itself sometimes acts as a kind of anodyne, numbing the realization of the awfulness of what has happened."

Molly glanced up smilingly as I entered her room.

"Oh, John," she said, "I was just wishing you would come in. I have been looking at this catalogue of infants' wear. There is a picture of a cap that I want to get for baby just as soon as—"

She stopped, still with the smile on her lips.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "You look so funny."

Then I told her.

The smile was wiped from her face as a picture is wiped from a slate by passing a wet sponge over it. But what I saw most of all was the expression in her eyes. It was of horrified incredulity, the look of a child who, on holding its lips up for a kiss, receives a brutal blow.

"Darling! Darling!" I exclaimed, gathering her into my arms. "Don't look like that! Don't!"

She did not cry out—only sat there staring at me with that gaze that almost broke my heart. She had been so happy, so trustful and secure only a moment before—and my words had wrought this change.

We have never had another child. Molly has never wanted one.

"It would only mean more suffering and a chance for more unhappiness," she has said several times. "And unhappiness is what I cannot endure."

It was because she could not endure unhappiness that she wanted to resume her normal life soon. She could not bear to think of what had happened, she told me tearfully. Would I therefore see that every trace of our child's belongings was put out of the way immediately?

"What shall I do with them, darling?" I asked.

"I do not care," she said simply. "Just do something with them quickly. I want to forget—if I can."

The nurse told me of a poor mother who needed clothes for her young baby, and I sent all of our child's belongings to her.

So well were Molly's requests carried out that in a week's time nobody would have known that a baby had ever come to our home. The mother herself never spoke of him.

"Mrs. Armstrong is an ideal patient," the doctor remarked. "I have never seen anyone who tried so hard to obey orders."

I repeated this praise to my wife, and she smiled and patted my hand.

"I do as I am told so that I may soon be up and around," she said. "It bores me to sit here in my room day after day. I have been thinking, Jack, that it will be pleasant to have some dinners and things like that as soon as I am strong enough. And you and I must go out as much as we can. Young people make a big mistake when they don't go about and have good times. I don't mean to settle down into a staid matron before it is absolutely necessary."

"I don't want you to settle down," I assured her.

When I said it, I thought I meant it.

I had a sinking of heart as I remembered the bills that illness and death had brought us. These must be paid. But I did not want to worry my poor little wife by speaking of them.

Thus it came about that I took on extra work out of hours. My office work is strenuous while it lasts—but I can often get away by four in the afternoon, and have two hours before dinner in which to do outside writing.

Molly smiled when I told her that I had arranged to do some extra work that would temporarily increase our income.

"That's nice," she nodded approvingly. "If we entertain and go out much, it will mean additional expense."

"It certainly will," I agreed.

"This new work seems providential, dear, doesn't it?" she commented joyfully. "That is what I so often say. If one will just not worry, things will come her way."

I hesitated to cast even a shadow of a cloud over her content. Yet I must not let her believe that the extra money could imply extra expenditures.

"Yes, it *is* providential, darling," I

agreed. "As you know, we had heavy expenses last summer, and I want to pay those bills."

She raised her hand as if warding off a blow.

"Don't talk of that, dear, please!" she murmured. "Let me forget about it. I know your expenses were much heavier than you expected—but it does no good to remember that now. Just pay the bills as soon as possible—then we can breathe freely and enjoy what's left."

How gentle and childlike she was, I mused. And I determined to do just what she said—pay off the bills, and say no more to her about it. She was not fit to cope with the hard facts of life.

Because I did not want to worry her, I spoke very carefully, and, as I hoped, tactfully, when she went out on her first shopping tour for new clothes that Autumn.

"Buy what you really need, Molly," I advised. "But do not plunge too heavily just yet. In a few months, I hope to be able to let you get more pretty things."

"Thank you, dear," laying her face against the hand with which I had patted her cheek. "You are so reasonable that I know you understand that I need a good many clothes. You see I have bought no new ones since I was married. My trousseau has lasted well, hasn't it?"

"Yes, dear, it has," I replied, although I really knew very little about it. "But we will have to replenish gradually."

"I will only get what I really have to have," she promised.

I was somewhat appalled when the bills arrived. I had not expected them to be so large. It was, as Molly would have said, providential that an order for another bit of writing had come to me that very day. This made it possible for me to look at the matter more philosophically than I would otherwise have done. I had paid doctor and undertaker—so why should I complain?

I had hoped to put aside a little something in the bank. But I would do this later.

It was the first of the month before Molly asked me any questions as to my opinion of her purchases. Then a sheaf of bills in the morning mail reminded her of the subject.

"You don't think I was extravagant, Jack, do you?" she inquired, looking at me across the breakfast-table.

I hesitated for a minute before answering her.

"Well, darling," I said slowly, "I suppose you had to have the clothes—and, such being the case, why discuss the matter?"

"But," she insisted, "what did I buy that I could have done without?"

"Dear child, I don't know," I replied. "Only—well—it struck me that that new coat was pretty expensive—don't you think?"

"But," she protested, "it was as cheap as I could get—one trimmed with fur like that I mean. And I thought you would want me to have something really pretty."

Her voice broke and I saw the tears in her eyes. She had been so satisfied with her purchase that my heart smote me.

"Of course I want you to have a really pretty coat," I assured her. "Don't think about it again, please. I am sure when I see you in it, with that dark fur up around your throat, I will be so much charmed with you that I shall want you always to wear it."

She smiled through her tears.

"I am glad you understand," she said. "Even if that coat was a bit of an extravagance, the other things were not."

My dread of making her unhappy was too great to allow me to dispute her statement.

II

THAT was a strenuous winter for me. Molly had many friends and they must have found her a delightful companion, for they accepted all her invitations and returned her hospitality by inviting us to affairs of all kinds.

After our first large dinner-party I wounded my wife's feelings, although I had no intention of doing so.

"Wasn't the evening a great success, John?" she exclaimed when our last guest had taken his departure.

"Indeed it was, darling," I replied. "And you made a charming hostess. The food was excellent and well-served, your table was stunning, and everything went off beautifully."

"I am so glad you think so," perching upon my knee as I sank into a big chair. "I love entertaining Don't you think we might plan to give a dinner like this every fortnight? It is the easiest and prettiest way of entertaining. In that way we can have lots of our friends here by the time the winter is over—and wipe out all of our obligations."

She was watching me eagerly. I saw that her heart was set upon the plan.

"But Molly," I protested as gently as I could, "dinners like this one we had to-night are expensive. Once in a while they are delightful. But until your husband"—with a little laugh—"is a bit more successful financially, we will have to deny ourselves much of this kind of thing."

Her face fell, but she spoke very calmly. "I understand, dear, yet aren't you making quite a bit of extra money by all that writing you are doing out of the office?"

"Yes," I told her, "I am making quite a bit. But we're living right up to our income as it is. Prices are higher than ever, and our way of living is more extravagant than it was last year."

"Why?"

"I suppose because you and I entertain more, go about more, and have to dress accordingly," I answered frankly.

"You disapprove of this?" she asked as innocently as a child.

"No—I don't—" I said. "That is, if we do it in reason."

"Surely," she pleaded, "it is not so very unreasonable to have company to dinner twice a month, is it?"

"Unless one can afford it, it certainly is unreasonable!" I said more sharply than I appreciated.

My wife began to cry softly.

Often during the past few months she had shed a few tears when we had an argument. It always made me feel like a brute—and of late this feeling was mingled with one of resentment. I hated to be put in the position of an inconsiderate husband.

"Please, my dear," I pleaded, "do be reasonable! What is there to cry about?"

Some women would have retorted angrily, but my wife did not. Instead, she dropped her head upon my shoulder and sobbed that she was sorry she had annoyed me. Of course she wanted to help me save money. She knew she was silly to cry so easily. She did not know what had come over her lately. She was unaccountably depressed. Perhaps one reason was that she saw so much less of me than she used to.

"What do you mean?" I demanded, surprised at this last statement.

She sat up and dried her eyes as she reminded me that during the first year of our marriage she had been in the habit of meeting me downtown late in the afternoon and going somewhere for a cup of tea with me. Didn't I remember? And had I forgotten the lovely walks we used to have in the early dusk? We never had them now.

I admitted as much, but explained that extra work necessitated my coming home from the office as soon as the subway would allow, and shutting myself in my room at my desk for two hours before dinner.

Yes, she knew that, but she missed me none the less. She supposed she was very silly, but she did love to be with me. She never used to get depressed so easily, but nowadays she was blue unless she was doing something all the time.

I kissed her, told her I understood how it was, and advised her to try to have some friend with her each day during those two hours before dinner. Surely some of her women friends would meet her and have tea with her somewhere. Or why not ask one or two to run in here at the tea-hour, if that was the time she felt her loneliness most?

That would be a good idea, she admitted. She would act upon my suggestion.

She did this with so great success that

on many afternoons when I let myself softly into the door of our apartment, I would hear a number of feminine voices and a clatter of tea cups. Occasionally with the sounds would be mingled deep masculine tones. Mrs. Armstrong's afternoon teas were becoming quite a thing in what we called "our set."

Molly was so happy in this new form of amusement that I did not remind her forcibly of what the affairs cost. I only suggested as tactfully as I could that she serve simple refreshments. She agreed with me that it was good form to do so.

"I have only some pretty little sandwiches, and cakes, besides chocolate and tea," she told me. "And I make the sandwiches myself—and some of the little cakes besides. So they do not cost nearly as much as if I had them made by a confectioner."

I had to acknowledge the truth of her assertion. Perhaps I am a coward, but I could not summon courage to tell her that raw materials themselves were not cheap just now.

That winter I proved the truth of the statement that to him that hath shall be given—so far as work is concerned. One order after another came for me to write articles along my own particular line. I needed the money, for without something beyond my salary we would run into debt. I explained this to Molly, and she said she appreciated just how that was, for everything cost so much more than it ever did before, and other housekeepers had told her the same thing. We were very fortunate, she felt, in being able to make something beyond our regular income.

"It is wonderful to be as clever as you are, dear Jack," she said, running her hand affectionately through my hair. "I tell you, brains pay! And you are a wonderful worker."

It was at this time that I formed the habit of rising an hour earlier than had been my custom, thus getting some time for work before going down to my office at nine o'clock. At first Molly had insisted on having breakfast at seven-thirty instead of eight-thirty as usual. But I soon persuaded her to abandon this plan. If we breakfasted together, it meant that we would linger over the table and chat. She smilingly agreed to my suggestion.

"All right," she said, "I will do as you say—if you really don't mind. I will tell Jennie to give you your breakfast at half-past seven. Then I can get mine when I wish. I suppose it is hardly worth while for both of us to lose that extra hour of sleep."

I am an unreasonable person. For, while I had made this suggestion myself, I felt slightly wounded that she did not insist that I must not eat alone.

I soon got into the habit of going to my den and desk as soon as I was dressed. Here Jennie would bring me a roll and coffee when they were ready. I did not want much to eat. I always write with more ease when I haven't had much.

As my day's work began so early and didn't end until seven o'clock, I was very tired by the time I came to our dinner table at seven-thirty. Molly liked me to wear a dinner jacket for our home dinners. She always wore a pretty evening gown even when we were alone. The first night that I failed to dress for dinner, she widened her eyes.

"Why, Jack dear, aren't you well?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered, "I am well, but I have been hard at work all day, and I felt too done-up to bother to change to-night."

"Poor dear!" she sympathized. "But I really think changing makes one feel rested, don't you? And besides that, the Dexters want us to come to their house to-night. They are having a musicale."

I frowned. I suppose I should be ashamed to confess it—but I am no saint.

"I don't want to go!" I declared bluntly. "Music bores me when I am so tired. Do you want to go very much?" I added, noting the flush that came to Molly's face.

"I did want to, very much," she replied. "In fact, I accepted for us both. There are to be some very fine artists there."

"I tell you what," I proposed, "let me call a taxi for you, and you go without me."

"Oh, no," she protested. "I would rather not do that. There would be no fun in going without you."

"I hate to disappoint you," I said reluctantly. "But, really, dear—I am very tired."

"Of course you are," she said, "and no wonder! You have been bending over a desk all day. You need change. That is the great trouble with you, Jack dear. You work too hard and get too little recreation. You almost make me hate your work."

She said the words regretfully, not impatiently, but they irritated me.

"Do you suppose I do it for fun?" I demanded. "We need the money, and we've got to have it, that's all."

Her lips trembled when she spoke again. "I am sorry you misunderstand me, dear, and I am sorry my plan for your evening's pleasure annoyed you."

"Don't take that tone," I begged. "You always put me in the wrong, Molly."

"I do not mean to," with exasperating gentleness, and I had the familiar sensation of self-disgust. "I seem to have the faculty of rubbing you the wrong way, dear—in spite of my love for you."

Her voice broke. What could I say or do except what she wanted me to say and do?

"Oh, well, I suppose I was cross," I said. "I'll go and dress now and we'll take in the musicale."

The evening was intolerably long. I am not especially fond of music anyway, and that at Mrs. Dexter's was of a rather amateurish variety. Yet, as the so-called "artists" were her friends, I had to join in the other guests' praises of them, and I was very tired.

It was that way all winter long. Molly wanted me to go out with her every night, or we entertained at home. Work as hard as I might, our expenses kept pace with my income.

Again and again I tried to make Molly see this. She never lost her temper, but would show signs of depression for hours after one of our business-talks.

"I do not see what we can do about it!" she would exclaim despairingly. "Goodness knows we give up lots of things other people have, and if life is worth living at all, it's worth living decently. To live like hermits and never see one's friends wouldn't be much fun, you must admit, dear Jack. The pleasure I get from my friends is all that I have in the world except you, you know, dear. But how glad I am that I have you!"

The fault may be all mine. But I felt as if my whole nature was changing.

I was frightened when I found myself becoming bored by my wife. I told myself vainly there was no excuse for it—for she was always gentle. Even when depressed, she never lost her temper.

III

THAT Spring Molly decided that she wanted to go away. Could I arrange to cut work for a while and go to the Adirondacks with her?

I told her most emphatically that I could not. But if she wished to go, I would try to make it possible for her to stay at some quiet country-place.

But she wanted to go to a certain Adirondack resort, she explained. Mr. Dexter was a member of a club there, and Mrs. Dexter had asked us to go as their guests for a fortnight. When I said that this was quite impossible, Molly told me she was sure that if she went alone Mrs. Dexter would want her to spend July, August and a part of September with her.

"Do so, my dear," I urged. "It will do you good."

"But I hate leaving you," she protested.

"Oh, I will get on," I said with a fine show of unconcern.

"You are so plucky!" she cooed, and I felt like a hypocrite.

She went—and at first I was, to my surprise, conscious of a certain blankness. Then a great sense of relief seized me.

That was a wonderful summer for

me. To be sure, I had to work hard, for Molly's vacation outfit was very elaborate. Moreover she had insisted that if she was to stay at the Adirondack club for several months she would not do this as the Dexters' guest.

"Two weeks might be all very well," she had explained. "But three months would seem like presuming on hospitality. It would look, John, as if my husband was not able to pay my way."

To which, of course, I agreed. She was right. Yet my breath was taken away when I learned the club rates.

"Couldn't you go to some less expensive place, Molly?" I asked. "Some place where the air is quite as good, but which is not quite as fashionable as the club?"

Her face showed a disappointment that was actually childlike.

"Oh, John! Where could I go? You see I have told the Dexters that I would stay up there, and they have engaged my room and everything. Still," with an effort to speak cheerfully, "if you really feel that you don't want me to—"

She paused, and her silence was more eloquent than words.

"Oh, that's all right, of course," I assured her — just as she knew I would. "I will manage to raise the wind, of course."

Her lip trembled.

"I am sorry, John, to be such a burden," she began.

But I walked from the room as if I did not hear her. I knew I was rude —but I was tired and my nerves were rather raw just then.

That summer I managed to get some recreation in spite of hard work. But it was only such recreation as I wanted to take. I shall never forget those three months of what in my secret soul I called "freedom."

In some research work at one of the libraries, I met Hildegarde Fleet—a young writer of whose work I had heard a good deal. Our common interest made our acquaintance easy. Moreover she knew a number of writing folk whom I knew, so we did not meet as strangers.

Hildegarde was what is called "a good sport." She was straightforward, energetic and clever, with a courage and perseverance that won my immediate admiration. I doubt if any two women could have been as totally dissimilar as Molly and this bright, brave creature.

I think Hildegarde liked me from the first, but only as a friend. She could not know that to me her companionship was like a breath of fresh wind blowing through a close, artificially-heated room. I felt my spirit stand erect once more; I saw life as a beautiful gift to be used and enjoyed. My work took on a new meaning.

I did not appreciate how far I was drifting from old ways, nor how happy I was becoming, until a letter from Molly announced that she would be at home in another week. Mid-September was already here.

That night I sat up late in my darkened room. I looked my immediate future squarely in the face and told myself that it was mine to do as I pleased with.

I said this even while I remembered Molly. For as I reviewed our last year together I was sure she did not love me so much that existence without me would be unhappiness for her. She had recently expressed a wish to go out to California sometime and make her relatives there a long visit. I would tell her she could do this, and that I would send her every cent that I could spare. As soon as possible I would settle upon her a stated sum of money. I would explain to her that we would be better apart—that we were absolutely uncongenial, that I was hurting her and that she was dwarfing me.

I did not look far beyond the next year or two. I did not dare do that. I know now that in my heart was the hope that Molly would meet some man and love him, and ask for a divorce. In that case I would be free. After that? I did not dare think.

It seems strange how thoroughly one can convince one's self that an act is possible—is, in fact, the simplest thing in the world, regardless of circumstances.

Molly had written by what train she

would reach New York, asking me to meet her at the Grand Central. Of course I would do this in spite of the fact that it necessitated my leaving the office an hour earlier than usual. I would work later to-morrow, thus making up for my absence.

I stood, watching the stream of men and women coming from the train by which I expected my wife. At last I saw her.

She was looking wonderfully well. I noticed her dainty apparel, the shapely feet in the fashionable shoes, even the short steps she took as she hurried toward me. Those steps, that pigeon-like gait, irritated me. It seemed so characteristic, so much a part of Molly. She smiled, showing her regular white teeth.

"Oh Jack!" she exclaimed, lifting her face for my perfunctory kiss. "Here you are, aren't you?"

"You expected me, didn't you?" I said, annoyed by her bromidic greeting.

That, I told myself, was one thing that exasperated me about Molly. I could not recall a single original remark she had ever made. Now Hildegarde—

I checked my thoughts to listen to my companion.

"It was dusty on the train," she was saying, "but they had those screens in the windows. They always do have them in car-windows, you know."

"Yes, I know," I rejoined. "Here is your cab."

She chatted all the way home. I do not remember what she said except that she was already planning what she would do this winter, the people she hoped to see a great deal of, etc., etc. Ahead of me, unless I made a decided stand, was stretched a dreary vista of "functions" to which I must go, bored and tired; at which I must talk the small talk that I had not heard or made use of for three free months. I couldn't stand it!

I had told Jennie to put the apartment in perfect order for Molly's home-coming. Perhaps I felt that in doing this I was making some reparation for my inward rebellion.

I sat silent through the excellent dinner that Jennie had prepared, turning over in my mind what I would say to Molly.

Perhaps, after all, it would be best for me to tell her that I would go away for a while—and leave her here in the home she liked. The blame would then be attached entirely to me. Or, if she preferred, I would pretend to the world that I had taken a position in the far West and was going out there to try it before sending for her. That would make it possible for her to have the kind of a New York winter for which she was already planning.

Now I know that all these fancies, all these schemes, were the distorted ideas of a man whose nerves and work had left him unfit to see things clearly. At least that is what I tell myself to-day.

This theory is borne out by my action that evening when, dinner over, my wife and I faced each other in our pretty living-room.

Sinking into a deep chair, she drew a long breath of contentment.

"It's good to get back home, Jack," she declared. "I do hope we are going to have a nice winter together."

"I hope *you* will have a nice winter," I rejoined.

Something in my voice made her look up quickly.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Just this," I said, dropping into a chair in front of her. "You have a right to enjoy existence in your own way."

"So I do," she remarked, when I paused. "You always let me."

"Yes—I always let you, Molly. And that's where the rub is. You want one thing, I want another."

"Do you, Jack?" she questioned, wonderingly.

"You know I do," I said, trying to speak steadily. "I, for instance, hate society; you love it. My writing demands my time. We live in a way that makes extra work necessary—yet I can't take needed rest because I have to go out or entertain at home night after night."

She laid her hand on my arm.

"Darling," she said, "don't talk like that, please. I have just come back after all these weeks away from you—and I want to be happy, and I want you to be happy, too. You are tired and have been alone too much this summer. I see just how it is. But when our lives become normal again—when we are living as we did all last winter—then you will understand that it is for your own good that I drag you away from your desk. Just think how it was last year, Jack."

I sprang to my feet.

"Good God!" I exclaimed—"that is just what I am thinking of!"

She, too, stood up, facing me, very pale, but making no outcry.

"Jack," she said again, "what do you mean?"

She did not raise her voice. My own tones sounded horribly rough and coarse as I spoke.

"I mean that this kind of thing is intolerable, Molly. And it can't go on! I can't stand it—and you ought not to stand it!"

She did not speak, and I looked at her. Into her eyes had come the expression I had seen there once before—of horrified incredulity, the look of a child who, expecting a kiss, receives a brutal blow.

I had not anticipated that look. It was my undoing. With a quick step forward, I caught her in my arms.

"Darling! Darling!" I exclaimed. "Don't!—don't look like that!"

For an instant she buried her face on my shoulder. Then she lifted her eyes to mine. They were full of tears.

"Oh, Jack," she murmured, "how you frightened me! Why, dear—I thought for one awful moment that you meant it. Why did you speak like that, Jack?"

"Just to test you, dear." I gasped the lie hoarsely. "It was a foolish, cruel thing to do."

"Never mind," she soothed, patting my face. "I ought to have known you were just in fun!"

IV

It was several months later that, letting myself softly into my apartment at dusk one afternoon, I paused in the hall on the way to my den. Molly was entertaining a caller. I recognized Mrs. Dexter's voice. She was speaking of me.

"I have never known a more devoted husband, my dear," the matron was saying. "So many men are selfish and fickle!"

"It only proves," came my wife's sweet, *trainante* accents, "that gentleness will win and hold love when wit or brilliancy might not. Do you know, dear Mrs. Dexter, that I have never yet spoken a sharp word to my husband?"

I passed on noiselessly to my den, closing and locking the door behind me.

Then I dropped into a chair and, with a smothered groan, buried my head in my hands.

WOMEN are merely antidotes to each other.

THE NUMSKULL

By John H. McNeely

THE numskull sat next to her in the box at the theatre.

His eyes were staring fixedly at the stage, where the chorus girls were prancing awkwardly about, kicking up their toes and syncopating their bodies in an effort to keep time with the music. Every now and then, when the comedian twisted his face in some ridiculous contortion, he would nudge her slyly in the side and emit a dry, cackling laugh that made icy rigours creep over her.

The numskull was highly entertained by this brazen and unrefined musical production. The blare of the music, the lustre of the scenic display, the brilliancy of the lighting effects, the glittering costumes and exposure of unshapely limbs fascinated and held him spellbound. He had not looked at her since the curtain rose. He had not addressed a word to her. That occasional poke of his elbow was the only manifestation that he was conscious of her existence.

So this was the man to whom she had plighted her troth? In him were tied up all her hopes, her dreams, her ambitions, her future happiness. Within four weeks she would become his wife, fettered and manacled to him for the remainder of her life. No escape was possible except through the divorce courts, and she would never consent to being dragged through the mire of public scandal.

She looked at his physiognomy, with its inept and stupid expression, as he intently watched the performance in front of him. His profile appalled her. Never before had she noticed the sloping contour of his forehead. It slanted almost straight back from his eyebrows. And his long, sharp nose seemed more pointed than ever. His weak chin, too, was accentuated as his lower jaw drooped and parted the lips of his half-open mouth.

How had she ever permitted herself to be the subject of his wooing? She knew from the beginning that he was a simpleton. She knew that he was a numskull. Still, she had submitted to his attentions, accepted his extravagant gifts, listened to his silly babble and actually coquetted with him. Of course, she had no one to blame but herself. It would have been possible for her to scorn him with disdainful mockery at any time during the months that he had so assiduously courted her. But she had deliberately allowed the affair to go to the finish.

What a spectacle he had made of himself that night he proposed! She could see him now, smiling sheepishly as he stuttered and sputtered. His knees trembled and his voice shook when he finally after a struggle succeeded in asking her to become his wife. It was almost with a feeling of pity that she accepted him. Why had she given her consent? Why had she not repulsed him? Had the lure of riches benumbed her senses? Had she entered into this bargain with a full realization of the counterfeit that she was to receive as her husband? A feeling of self-disgust slowly began stealing over her, consuming her very soul. Then suddenly she saw the curtain falling on the last act and she aroused herself

"Pretty good show, wasn't it, dearie?" the numskull said, amid the bedlam of discordant song from the stage and the tumultuous blasts from the orchestra.

"Yes, I enjoyed it immensely," she replied.

A STILL-LIFE

By Helen Sholes

DUE to the angle at which they were sitting, her whole figure and averted head were lighted by the lamp on the table. He could watch her without her knowing it. He liked to examine her. Sometimes, of late, he disliked her so much that her very exterior had for him the attraction of the disagreeable and the painful. It wasn't that he didn't still love her in a helpless, commiserating kind of way. But to have to be pitying someone constantly becomes, in itself, intolerable. It was his very pity, binding him to her, which at these almost convulsive periods of reaction most turned him against her.

She was sitting now in the chair in which, every evening, she always settled herself, and was making doll's clothes. She was a creature of habits. It wasn't so much that she originated them as that she became their victim. She had sat near him in the evening and sewed at something as far back as he could remember.

This codifying of all life's gestures was another thing that irked him. He still had an adolescent fondness for the element of uncertainty in even the minutiæ of existence.

He noted the long, familiar lines of her figure outlined against the chair. They were no more variable nor uncertain than the rest of her. They were cast past any modifying, and she seemed on the whole relieved as to this. She had settled into an uncomplaining, haggard plainness which her unquestionably handsome features did nothing to enliven.

Her girlish slenderness had sagged and flattened into a broad, numb, angularity. The once slim waist was thicker, the narrow shoulders sharp and slack; even her hands had lost their contour and had become blunted and thick at the joints.

Her profile was still fine, for her features had that probity which resists any amount of wear and tear. But there were deep lines in her face which living with him had put there; anxious, strained lines; a look of abjectness and fear. It was this abject quality, the deprecation in her large black-lashed eyes, that at times so infuriated him and drove him to brutalities of omission and commission of which he had never dreamed himself capable.

As he watched her he seemed, suddenly, to be watching a stranger. They were radically separated from each other by her total lack of attraction for him, both physical and mental. Nothing held them any longer but the flimsy, strained thread of his pity.

He hadn't even an inkling these days of what went on behind her tense, blank face. He watched her as he would watch a stranger.

How would he feel if he were seeing her to-day for the first time? He tried to revive his first sensations.

There had been an evening when he had sat in a room with her as he was sitting now; his whole body had vibrated. He hadn't been able to look away from her pale gold hair growing smoothly back from her brow. He had wanted violently to go to her and press it smoother; feel it sliding like fine strong silk beneath his hand. He had hardly restrained this impulse.

In those days he had liked her wide, mournful, opaque expression. Mediæval, he had thought it. For her face

had always been wistful, too emotional and tearful perhaps, but with a tension somewhere, a fund of reserve which, as it turned out, was chiefly her tenacity of loving.

As he watched her and let his thoughts travel back over the six years of their married life, he asked himself if he had ever loved her. Hadn't he even married her out of pity and acquiescence, because she had loved him so much? It seemed to him now, as he thought of it, that she had been loving him ever since they had known each other, and binding him with her soft, clinging, tearful meekness.

Had there ever been a time when in her presence he hadn't felt the constriction of it? She had used her weakness and dependence as another woman would her bodily charm, to rivet him to her. Even in those first days she had dragged him back again and again when he had tried to escape. For he had wanted to escape from the beginning. He was sure of it, as he stared at her blunt fingers fumbling with the needle and the dropping forward over the white material of her baffled, nearsighted gaze. . . . He wasn't the marrying kind, the settling kind.

He would like to break free to-morrow from the narrow, futile life he was living, the uncongenial work, this business of making a living. If he weren't married he wouldn't have to make a living. He could go houseless and hungry for days; he could wander from place to place until he found some work that struck him as worth doing. He could find out what was in him; really try himself out. He would be free. Supposing he were to go?

His eyes glittered a moment as they encountered the unconscious woman opposite him. It would be utterly brutal to leave her. Without him she would be derelict. She knew very few people. Outside of her house and its little puttering jobs there was nothing she could do. She was meant to live in a house with a man, to keep it for him, to care for him, bear him a number of children, and in turn, tend and worship and harass them. It was an added cruelty that he hadn't given her so much as a child to compensate for his shortcomings.

He had given her nothing, except the unhappiness which was growing sharper for her every day. His presence gave her constant pain. He had felt convinced of late that the hours he spent out of the house were the only times in which she didn't suffer. While he was with her she was constantly aware of his rebellion, his daily increasing estrangement, his agonized restlessness. And she was trying, hopelessly and automatically almost, to drag him back again.

It was all so impossible and so distressing. For there was nothing that either of them could do. Without his own consent even, he had swung utterly clear of every appeal she could make. They were as separated now as any number of physical miles could make them. If he were to go, it might be better on the whole. She would suffer frightfully for a while, a month, a year even, and then if she didn't fall ill of it or kill herself, she would recover. Eventually she would find a man to love her as she required to be loved, and to make her happy. This way they would both drag on in wretchedness, draining each other's nervous force, hampering and torturing each other.

He let himself imagine, for the moment, that he was looking at her for the last time, watching her putter in her nearsighted, adolescent fashion over those finger jobs, women's gear, *doll's clothes*, what not, by means of which she killed the time. Would he miss her? He supposed he would miss her. It wasn't possible not to feel a wrench at breaking off even such a relation as their living together had been. And yet he couldn't imagine that any regret would dominate for long the passionate relief which the gaining back of his freedom would mean to him.

To be able to turn his back on her pathetic, patient wistfulness once and for all! Never to have to hear again in her voice the tears and sobs crushed

back that they might not offend him; never to have to watch her hands and lips trembling, or see her eyes always dark-circled from sleepless nights and the anxiety to perceive in his look and his very silences that which would give her fresh pain!

It was becoming unbearable, his sense of her constantly, silently suffering. It didn't move him any longer; it angered him. It wasn't his fault if she suffered. He had never wanted to hurt her. He had given her all he had to give, and if it fell short, it wasn't his fault. He was as helpless as she was. Why couldn't she understand this and let him go? . . . She angered him. He wondered how long it would be before this irritation would leap out of his control, as his formerly repressed aversion to her was doing of late.

The electricity went off for a moment, and when it came back she raised her eyes and smiled anxiously at him. He smiled back wanly. Why was she anxious? Did she suspect him of treachery?

Behind his smile the cruel thoughts went on. He watched her snipping at her material in haphazard fashion, turning the stuff round and round. He had never seen her use a pattern. She never used one in regard to anything. She did everything haphazardly and without a plan. She lived at the level of her instincts, and from moment to moment. He was obsessed with an impulse to make her take hold of that white stuff and make into it, with her scissors, one clean, determined slash. He wanted her to stop teasing it, fumbling at it. Violently he looked away from her.

In that precise moment he became conscious of his absolutely established resolve to go away. The thing had ceased to be a theory to play with, and had become a fact, a reality. His whole psychology had changed. He felt himself a new person, no longer wavering, introspective, acquiescent, but virile and dynamic. The change had happened somehow! He was going. To-morrow night at this time he would be gone. He would be a part of some train's cargo. The wheels would be crunching beneath him; the regular throb of the motion would put him to sleep.

Brusquely he stretched his long legs; the muscles, cramped for so long, expanded in relief. He was aware of an almost affectionate feeling for his wife, now that he had resolved to leave her. He wondered whether this feeling would increase in the same proportion as the distance between them. He didn't allow himself to forecast what she would be doing twenty-four hours away. That way lay madness, sentimentality, the tyrannical pity which had been crippling him for six years. She would manage, since she would have to. And even if she couldn't, he couldn't stop now, nor turn back. He was a different man than he had been ten minutes previous. *This* man had to go!

He closed his book, rose and stood in front of her.

"Whose doll are you making those things for?"

He reflected, as he asked his question, how pitiful it was, how tragic almost, that he hadn't given her even a child. Her evenings, then, needn't have been quite so trivial. She wouldn't, at least, have had to keep making doll's clothes.

At this question she looked up eagerly and held out the bit of flannel. "Isn't it cunning? Can you make out what it is?"

He pushed it back on to her lap. "Oh, no, I can't. I don't know anything about dolls."

She pressed the thing toward him again in spite of his very evident irritation. Her eyes were limpid; her loose trembling lips were trying to force a smile.

"It's a baby's nightgown," she said softly. "But then, you don't know anything about babies, either, do you?"

He heard, with his old disgust, the sentimental overtones in her voice, its slackness, and lack of power to hold the tone up to the end of the sentence. He wondered why she needed to re-

lease all her tear ducts at the mere mention of the word *baby*.

"No," he said curtly. "Whose baby is it for?"

"Ours."

Her breath caught in her throat; the tears which had given a sheen to her dull eyes flowed over.

"I've wanted to tell you for five months. But I was afraid to. Please say you're glad."

Mechanically he put his arms around her, and then as her whole body yielded rapturously to his support he sat down on the chair from which he had risen and took her on to his lap. He tried to stem her emotion. He had a dim notion that a woman in her condition oughtn't to be allowed to cry.

"You should have told me," he heard himself saying. "I've got to raise some extra money somehow."

Meanwhile all he could see was a train rushing past him, and leaving him behind for good. To-morrow night he would be sitting here, after all, and the next night, and the next.

She leaned on him more heavily, pressing her body against his, caressed him passionately with her lips, and her groping eyes and her tense hands. "Don't worry about the money. Don't worry about anything. Just love me. You do love me, don't you? Tell me."

The anguish in her voice was unmistakable and authentic. It made his nerves writhe but it beat on the shell of his dead pity and roused no response. He tightened his hold about her.

"I do love you. Of course," he said.

GAWAYNE SINGS

By Maxwell Anderson

YOU who have had lovers,
  You who've kissed and given,
Stay a little, O wait a little
  Lest the skies be riven,

Lest there come a marvel,
  Lest a dream befall,
Lest a man turn god for you
  And snare you, soul and all;

You who have had lovers,
  You who have gone free,
Beware the light that makes men gods,
  O elude that sorcery!

CALLA LILIES

By Milnes Levick

I

IN the course of time the old woman had come to invest the garden with all the interdictions that in more spacious years had kept her parlour sacrosanct. It was hers, inviolate and dedicate; in it none other, not even Minnie, might interfere; if she could, she would have kept the sun itself away.

A small and pertinacious garden, such as she had always had, wherever she might be, through all the years. She tended it without love, as she cherished the stores of old papers, of rags and broken bits, that crowded the closets of the little house. In her long experience she had come to know to a degree the effort requisite and she husbanded her strength from it jealously, permitting it no more than would maintain the surface of its respectability. She did not sit in it, gathered no posies from it, and when from time to time she inspected it it was with a kind of unyielding dutifulness.

In the farthest corner, amid dried and tarry weeds, was a geranium, whose stalks were visible like the wrists of an ungainly lad. Upon the dust of its leaves drops of water left splotches of dark green. Its flowers drooped from vermilion to the shrivelled brown of their death, yet their smell always hung about this corner, pervading it stupidly.

There was also a rose geranium, from which the old woman would pinch a bit to crush it between her thumb and finger that it might linger about her like a memory, and from against the house a great fuchsia gushed a spatter of purple and red. But midway in the yard was her favourite, a group of calla lilies, dank and funereal in their sickness, huddled together like sorrowful orphans.

Upon the front of the cottage, on the middle panel of the bay window which projected in a half-hexagon, was a sign: "Artist." Beside the front door, over the china bell-pull above the three graceless steps, was another sign, larger and done like the first, staringly, with an incongruous lucidity, in black upon a white background: "Studio."

These signs alone distinguished the house from all the others in the alley. There was about them that dignity which separates professional announcement from advertisement. Yet to the old woman they were even more: they were the symbols of a happy enigma, of the incomprehensible waywardness with which life had led her to a kind of eminence through her daughter's repute.

Honour hovered about them, and she accepted it as redounding to herself. With Minnie's celebrity she quieted the misgivings which lingered unowned, before a talent so unaccountable. She was mystified, a little suspicious of what an artist is, must be. She sniffed the devil somewhere in this obscurity, and still was pleased that such merit had been brought forth from her body. "Artist," "Studio," surely it was a great thing. . . . Yet she did not quite understand.

Mrs. Burman went as in her Sunday's best. She would acknowledge the greeting of a neighbour with a reserve too naive to be resented as condescension; she accepted the kindly, gingerly deference of the corner shopkeepers with the simplicity of a right, reading into it a sympathy for the penury of

talent. They did not esteem Minnie as they should have. For she was aware of the distinction that lurked about the house marked "Artist"; knew too that it cast a lustre upon all the neighbourhood, setting off the alley from all others. Where else were directions to a stranger measured thus and so from the home and studio of a painter?

True, this stranger who became the supernumerary of her glory was largely hypothetical. None but Minnie's pupils ever touched the bell-pull under the sign.

By day scarcely less than by night the narrow and meaningless alley itself seemed unpeopled. Bay-windowed flat houses of three stories were its gateways; tall by contrast, they turned their backs and shunned the humbleness in their broad shadows. From the delimiting streets before them cries and the clatter of waggons might come fitfully, but in the brief course of the alley's single block a sombre quietude reigned; no pedlar with his waggon was tempted here, children found no spirit for the clamour of sprightlier streets, even the infrequent voice of gossip at a fence was subdued, brought down to a minor scale.

It was a place of secrecy and silent steps; figures flitted like crows through this back-path of the city, one of hundreds whose similarity mocks and confuses. They bore into the older quarters of San Francisco like the holes of worms in wood. They are of the town; they bear the stamp of its making and its tradition; its spirit abides in them no less than in greater thoroughfares, yet they remain unavowed while all else about them is glorified by a provincial egotism. They forget their identity and vanish like a lost river, to resume their straight and futile course a mile away beyond the roofs; they stop against a wall, like sightless men; they penetrate timidly into the heart of vast dull blocks, and are forgotten.

Dead ends, rows of cottages between side streets, snuggled by lamentable shrubbery, hugging it stealthily from a people that will have no curb-side verdure. The wanderer stumbles upon them, they pass from the tail of the eye unnoted. And after dark the gas lamps at their corners proclaim strange names in ruby letters. Terrace, lane, court, even avenue. Garden Place: it was as if the civic seigniors of a bygone day had been cajoled by a cynic whim to prove again, through this nomenclature, that man is an animal that laughs.

In Garden Place the houses stared each at its opposite as if astounded at the likeness to itself. They held themselves stiffly, perhaps in fear lest the false fronts topple from them and reveal their single-storied squatness for what it was. Their bay windows were embellished with identical jig-saw scrolls; their three steps led all to doors without vestibules; the very yards were alike in their flowers and their iron fences on box-like wooden bases, fences ornately curled, with trefoil crests.

The iron had once been black and the houses white, but the iron was now rusty and the cottages were grayed and the paint upon them scant.

In spots the dun boarding was tinged to green, as a tree may be, by lichen, for in Garden Place the fog hung thick through many months. It would settle upon the alley in the late afternoon, when it came scudding low across the sand dunes from the sea, or close in by dark, like besiegers. The odour of it lay heavy while the moisture gathered slowly on projections to fall in mournful, isolated drops.

Through the night, when the foghorns wailed distantly, the equalizing fog brooded over the houses and the pavement, frustrating the single street light of the block, smothering it in a silver nimbus. At such moments mystery walked in the shadows of the little street and it became the trysting place of beauty.

But by day through the bleak summer there was no gentleness. The chill trade wind scurried in, smiting with a dreary clumsiness; the calla lilies bent and the old windows chattered. The wind drove a scum high across the sky

till there was neither sun nor cloud; it pressed onward unremittingly, carrying the sweepings of the city blindingly before it. Upon the face of western walls it broke into gusts and eddies which swept the eastern pavements bare; tiny windstorms whirled in the street, dancing with tattered papers. On the wooden sidewalk of the western side sand and refuse piled unceasingly, shifting, banking against the fences, rising again to flake the grassless gardens with offal.

Mrs. Burman attained a lulling sense of protection inside the cottage. In its littleness was security against the wind and its hopeless dust, the monotony of the fog, the perplexities of the city, which made adventures of her excursions downtown for the quarterly formalities of her pension. Her world was here, within the tight walls sheltering herself, her daughter and the alien spirit of art, and she accepted proximity as companionship.

II

Beneath a semblance of familiarity she remained for ever in awe of Minnie's paintings. She affected to scoff, to look upon this work aloofly with a crabbed forbearance, but all her life was centred about it. The pupils, the titles of the pictures, the clutter in the room designed for a parlour—these governed the order of her day, creating for her a reluctant content.

She would stand in a corner of the studio, her head very erect, a cigar box of odds and ends of paint in her hand, and regard the work upon the easel.

"I don't think that's very nice, Minnie; she ain't got no yoke to her waist at all."

Minnie would not pause in the diligence of her art; brush between teeth, she would answer:

"That's the way it is, Addie."

Minnie spoke always with severe finality, as to a wearisome child, addressing her mother by her first name. She tolerated her, not from a remembrance of old affection nor from a sense of duty, but for the simple fact that she was there and could be nowhere else.

Before the unfairness of the old woman's presence as she pottered for ever at the household drudgery Minnie remained curt and cold. Resentment vibrated at a hundred daily irritations: the stubborn clinging to the name Minnie, long since transmuted to Minna; the positiveness of innocent opinions, the dogged tidying up.

Perpetually a combat was waged between them; upon the one side Minnie's anger at the confusion of unending arrangement; on the other the determination to impress a housewifely order upon the studio, to retrieve somehow the parlour that was lost to her when Minnie heard that a north light was essential to a studio and saw that the narrow side window faced north.

In her obtuseness Mrs. Burman was without discretion. She would invade the studio, dustcloth in hand, irrespective of pupils. Triumphant in Minnie's pretence of disregard, she would rummage and segregate as if brushes were forks and tubes of paint were spoons, until at last she would stand back, smiling slyly, and say:

"There now, don't that look better? I ask you, miss, don't it?"

And as the pupil assented, Minnie would half-turn her head to fling a word of expostulation.

In the wisdom of twelve years' experience Minnie no longer scolded after such incidents. Now she did not say, "These students just won't be bothered with you hanging around," nor "I ain't going to stand it, Addie." She merely shut her thin mouth tighter and her little colourless eyes avoided her mother determinedly.

Indeed, neither prudence nor the perverse desires of her daughter could dull the fascination these pupils had for Mrs. Burman. With hands red and steaming she would bustle to forestall Minnie at the door when they arrived singly at their appointed hours; from the darkness of the kitchen she would peer down the narrow hall with head

cocked like a terrier's; she regarded them furtively as she busied herself in the studio, and a gloating sense of cleverness would come to her. For these women and girls came to her house to learn, sought at a price a portion of the wisdom that was her daughter's; they sat at the feet of Minnie that they too might become artists.

Sometimes her exultance moved her to vaunt, and she would point to Minnie and beam knowingly at the pupil and say, "And she never had a lesson in her life. . . ."

They sat beside Minnie, watching each stroke of hers with the intentness of hungry souls to whom, even in the pursuit of culture, twenty-five cents an hour is twenty-five cents. They looked about, ill at ease, upon the colours, the canvases, the palette knives—all the machinery of art to which Minnie Burman referred stiltedly. They listened with eagerness to her glibly emphatic use of studio slang: scraps picked up from stories of Paris in romantic magazines or from clerks in the shop where she bought her materials. And Mrs. Burman saw that the pupils were dazzled by her Minnie.

Year by year they came, precise, determined, confident in the belief that a month, a few lessons, would open to them the mysteries, making them accomplished and desirable. Girls from stores and offices, prim young women of the neighbourhood, occasionally a schoolgirl or a teacher; and to each Minnie would talk of talent and composition and colour values. They came most often in the evening, their only leisure, and sat with infinite patience beneath the pallid Welsbach gaslight, copying eternal studies.

For Minnie worked not from life nor yet fancy, but from "artists' studies"; prints, marvels of commercial lithography and the three-colour press. She had never attempted anything else and would not have known how to begin; she had never painted her mother, had never ventured into the open, not even to the forlorn callas nor the unkempt fuchsia dangling in the yard.

But all about the studio, blotched and frayed, were little piles of studies. Anecdotes—with laughing lads and pink girls, upon whose romance she looked cynically, or, for the advanced, fat brown monks dozing over their wine; a yard of puppies, a yard of roses, like wallpaper; Minnie's favourite, a mound of carnations, bold and hard and explicit; it was with these that she inspired, with these she gauged her politic encouragement.

There were many canvases about, too, face outward in testifying stacks against the walls. And always, above the tomblike little fireplace with the red and gilt paper screen hermetically before it, hung a "Paul and Virginia." She called it so, would not have recognized it as "The Storm," and always she added for the newcomer a reference to Saint-Pierre's book, as if proud that the scantily clad youth and maid running beneath a scarf were an illustration to so estimable a tale.

In the twelve years of her teaching she had done "Paul and Virgina" many times, attaining a readiness in its execution with which to astound. Often she painted it upon Japanese matting, bought at a carpet house, for canvases six feet square, or even cardboard substitutes, are costly. And as fast as she could do them these pictures of the boy and girl for ever fleeing were absorbed in the devious avenues of her market; they left the studio to reappear within thin gilt moulding on the walls of lodge rooms, of lobbies, even of homes.

Minnie was proud of her facility with "Paul and Virginia," and proud also of her honesty, for she tried to make each copy exactly like all the others. The standard of a quantitative honesty imposed unflagging industry upon her and its measure attenuated her hours. So many minutes, so many square inches, so much intentness upon the task without digression from the exactitudes and the security of the study before her; beside this the guile of her praise was made white.

Self-satisfaction tingled virtuously

within her mind as she contemplated her labours, but deeper than that was the restlessness of disappointment. Pot-boiler: what was that? She had come slowly to know the way the word is used, yet she could not understand it. A picture was a picture, wasn't it? she would ask herself. And from her disability to fathom the word she derived a sustaining conviction of her superiority and the imperishable excellence of her integrity.

Sometimes she compared her pictures with the only criteria she knew, and her return to Garden Place would be a moment of bitterness and disillusion of the world's rewards.

She would go to the park and, in the dark and stuffy little museum, amid historic fire engines and the models of ships, would stand respectfully a long time before a vast historical piece, "The Last Spike," a parochial "Washington Crossing the Delaware," while she sought the secret of its supremacy; she would move slowly down the rows of muddy, overladen paintings of a fashion long outmoded, studying their inane elaborateness. For they were indubitably from Europe. And always she judged their work by their banality, and regretfulness would dull her energy, confirming the consciousness of rectitude, but troubling her too with the knowledge of the lack of appreciation.

Often her mood would associate this failure with something else, a hankering, a lack of she knew not what. . . . Art had not done right by her; she worked so hard and was so faithful and so honest. These others, who perhaps were not so scrupulous, made money and their work was hung in galleries, while she could trust only to her pupils and the pittance from the department store that was her patron.

The visits to the store were events. There was repose and exhilaration in them; Garden Place and the sedulity of Addie receded; Minnie touched the great world and felt its movement pass over her like a ripple.

The shop girls would look at her as she entered by the rear door with her canvases; new girls would nudge one another and Minnie could fancy she heard them whisper "An artist."

There were others whom she knew by sight; they would smile at her expectantly, as if the recognition of a painter gave a touch of vividness to their lives, and she would bow gravely, but smiling also, patronizing them unobtrusively.

She passed through a corridor of celebrity to the familiarity of the art department.

"How many to-day, Miss Burman?"

"Six little ones and four big ones."

The department manager took them with cursory inspection.

Perhaps he cautioned her as to the market when he handed her a receipt.

"Not too many carnations, Miss Burman; we got some left. Might use a few moonlights."

Through the homage of this confidence, as through the smiles of the sales-girls, the store gave her the strength of an appeasing popularity.

And there was also Mr. Porteous. . . .

III

Nearly always she contrived to see Mr. Porteous, loitering in the art department until he approached or under subterfuge making detours that took her past him. And always he greeted her with a slow, heavy urbanity which served to cover a tacit sympathy.

On occasion she pretended to examine the goods at a table that she might watch him. He carried his portly figure cautiously upon his out-turned feet, yet he had poise, was ever calmly alert to catch the eyes of women in quandary, and he would stoop over them like a large and reassuring policeman, a trifle stiffly, his head turned slightly in the habit of much leaning with attentive ear.

Minnie admired the resourceful vigilance of his manner. When from her distance she saw his plump hand rise and his lips move with the pregnance

of long service in directing, she marvelled how he could remember all the aisles and departments and wings of the immense store.

Once she expressed this wonder to him and he smiled as to say it was a slight thing for one who had known the ways of stylish shops who built their success upon the carriage trade.

He was a man for success. Envy and expectation surrounded him, setting off his astuteness. Even when she saw him idling, rubbing his signet ring soothingly upon his sleeve, he was to her eyes one who would command life, exacting his price from it without compunction. She thought of herself at home, leaning to her painting till her stiff shirtwaist crinkled across her narrow chest, and it seemed as if he would crowd the cottage to bursting if he ever entered there.

When he spoke to her of the frequency of her visits and the profit in them she laughed with coy deprecation.

Though they had come to know each other very well, Minnie never mentioned Mr. Porteous to Addie.

At first her reticence was without design: the thought of him had acquired no pertinence to Garden Place. He belonged to that other order where her arrival was acknowledged gratefully amid the murmur of affairs. His was a figure which reflected grandeur of fashion and wealth as it is revealed in the shops with a carriage trade. She tried to imagine all that he meant, to remember what it was like in stories: the leisureliness, the unquestioning acceptance of whatever fabric or jewel pleases, the voices and the furs and scents of the women above whose inquiries Mr. Porteous turned his wise, attentive head. . . . Her mother would break in upon such dreaming and again the studies, the pupils, the easel under the gaslight, would close around Minnie.

As she looked back upon him from the studio he appeared to her most often with his head bent sidewise, as to an appeal. Beside his imposing figure would be a woman, always a woman, waiting for his arm to rise and his lips to move with their terse infallibility. All day women looked up from the crowd and his deliberate eyes sought theirs and he would incline protectingly.

The knowledge of the women perturbed Minnie; she came to resent them, to want to shut them out—to put all women away from her thoughts, even Addie. She still tolerated Addie, only turning upon her correctively. But more and more her mother appeared intrusive, set upon exasperation as she hurried to let the pupils in or fribbled about the studio.

There were no men for Minnie to put from her, and Mr. Porteous spread into her life gradually. The image of him became the arbiter of her ideas and her judgments. From the eminence of isolation he seemed to look upon all that she did until she thought it unworthy to compare him with the other men she knew—the tradesmen, the art department manager, those she met in the oblique courses of vending "Paul and Virginia." And she submitted to this bland and flattering pervasion without question, without conscious aspiration, rejecting the insights of probability.

Mr. Porteous had been a daily fact to Minnie for some years before Mrs. Burman was made aware of him.

"Addie," said Minnie, without looking up from her easel, "Mr. Porteous is coming to call to-night."

The mother stood arrested.

"Who's he?"

"Mr. Roscoe Porteous. He's employed at the store."

"The store. . . . Oh!"

Her mother's wonder evoked a mysterious spirit of the intolerable. The resentment in her hushed exclamation stung like a sarcasm; it imbued the crooked gray figure of the old woman with a subtle mordancy.

Loneliness closed upon Minnie and she felt herself small, subdued and helpless, as the one street light in Garden Place must feel when the fog in its season shut in upon the alley. There

had been no one but Addie and the pupils and Mr. Porteous. . . . Suddenly he emerged from the blankness, reassuring and masterful, no longer an indefinite influence but tangible, standing close to her, gravely, as he had when she stifled timidity to ask him to call; and his arm rose and he spoke slowly from the depths of omniscience. . . .

Addie was the first to reach the door. He was standing upon the steps, hat in hand, and she was a little taken aback by the composure of this visitor for whom she had been baking cakes.

As they sat in the dining-room she studied him, blinking occasionally in the constraint of her straight chair square against the wall. He looked so big. He was so elegant. His hands were so nice and white, with the heavy seal ring shining as he moved them. And he was so attentive.

They sat each in a thin, stiff chair; Minnie with her arm on the table, simulating ease, Mr. Porteous graciously and with deferential negligence.

They spoke of the weather, of Garden Place and street cars, of the store with its involute rivalries for preferment. The deep voice of Mr. Porteous filled the little room gently, as with adumbrations of tone; he listened without interposing until the moment of assent, nodding or with pointed deference stirring Addie from her rumination to half-startled response. And slowly he led the talk to the compensations of art.

"You have a most unusual ability, Miss Burman."

"Oh, not at all, really."

"Ah, but yes. I have seen you come into the store, always with your paintings, for how many years now?"

"A good many."

"I'm sure the art department couldn't do without you. You are one of their most valuable adjuncts."

"That's what I keep telling her, Mr. . . . Mr. . . ."

"They'd get along all right if I died."

"But you're not going to die. I daresay, now, you've never missed a day's work through sickness. Isn't that so, Mrs. Burman?"

"Yes. Indeed. Minnie's always a-working, and hand-painting is hard work, too."

"Still, you really can't do all the pictures yourself—all that you bring? Do you include those your scholars paint?"

"Only now and then. Most of them—" Minnie smiled her depreciation."

"Yes, yes, of course. There's only one Miss Burman."

"And she never took a lesson in her life."

"Would you believe it! And do you paint other pictures?"

"Oh, yes. There's a big one in the studio now. I'll show it to you by and by. A 'Paul and Virginia.'"

"I suppose you readily find purchasers for those too?"

"That's why I do them."

"She sold one just last week. To a saloonkeeper. She got fifteen dollars for it."

"How fine. Do they take you long, the big ones?"

"Not very. Sometimes longer than others. You can't always tell, you know. And then there are lots of interruptions."

"This is quite interesting to me. I have often wondered how artists work."

"They work mighty hard; Minnie never seems to have a moment's peace."

"But you are fortunate, Mrs. Burman, to have so talented a daughter. It isn't every mother who is so lucky."

"Yes, that's right, Mr. Porteous. There ain't many like that, painting. These girls who come to take lessons—as if they could be artists, too!"

"Well, at any rate, they pay handsomely?"

"I've often said to Minnie they don't pay near what it's worth to them."

Minnie glanced down.

"Maybe I'll start a class some day," she said quickly.

"Still, with your lessons and the store and the other pictures, you must have a quite remunerative business." Mr. Porteous looked from one to the other blandly; his large figure became

a trifle set as he waited acutely for the answer.

"They don't appreciate her, Mr. Porteous." Mrs. Burman's voice quavered. "Not at all." She paused.

"Can it be?" In his tone was the unctuous heartiness of succour for a stumbling blind man.

"No, sir. Minnie works and works. But would you believe me—"

"Addie!"

"It's all right, Minnie; I wouldn't let everybody know, but with Mr Porteous it's different. Why, we just couldn't get along at all, Mr. Porteous, if it wasn't for my little bit of pension."

She looked at him pathetically, with that expectant tenderness the aged preserve to heighten the wrong of injustice against themselves. She stared, solemn and proud, and was oblivious of Minnie, of the hand that clenched upon the table, of the white rage that froze her daughter and silenced her.

Mr. Porteous never called again.

And with his passing thus briefly through the ken of Addie, the quality of life changed for her and the things that had been were dissolved. Life had directed her to a vicarious consecration; placid certainties had encircled her. Now her days were become brittle, breaking at a touch. And she knew not why, comprehending this no more than the other.

IV

For a time she remembered Mr. Porteous. "When is that man coming again, Minnie?" But Minnie would not reply directly; she never spoke of Mr. Porteous, nor of the night he had called, but kept the thought of him hidden that his image might share the malevolence she visited upon her mother.

Tolerance abandoned Minnie. She came complaining, at all times and in all places, even in the garden, giving orders coldly, as if determined to wear peace away to the last vestige.

She did not cast reproof over her shoulder from the easel, but rose to drive Addie from the studio righteously and with recrimination. It was Minnie who gave her pupils admittance, and when she thrust her mother from the door she smirked sardonically as if she had baulked some despicable game attempted by that injured and protesting old woman. Through the hours of the day Minnie pursued; at night there was silence between them, and Mrs. Burman puzzled over the change within the house that had taken the savour so from all that lay outside.

Now and then, at first, she attempted to speak. With her hands folded, she would sit unheeded in the stillness of the dining-room, until the memory of all the pinpricks became a single pain and she would say:

"Minnie, you shouldn't have went and dug up them calla lilies."

For a space she would contemplate the fruitlessness of her own aggrieved words, and then resume:

"Minnie, I don't know what's come over you lately."

The clock ticked a long time. She would go on as if conferring with herself:

"Everything seems out of joint . . . somehow or other . . . I don't know."

She mumbled on, her voice becoming indistinct, and Minnie gave no answer.

But Minnie's existence now was not empty or passionless. A joy of destruction filled it. It had been without sun or fire, and now it was lighted by the malicious gleam of little flames, tiny hidden flames that seemed to come in playful swiftness, wrapping themselves around Addie and around the image of Mr. Porteous. . . . Blue points of atoning flame.

So was Mrs. Burman borne before her daughter's implacability. Without vision and understanding, she regarded all that departed from her life and all that had come into it. She no longer entered the studio nor the yard, and when the doorbell rang she did not rise. She would sit alone, in the kitchen, her hands in her lap, her old eyes looking straight ahead, as if she might divine the nature of her bewilderment in the unbroken wall before her.

VESPERS

By Solita Solano

I

FLORA sat up and stared through the window. No trace of gray lightened the sky and the morning star, cold and white, still burned in the east. Disappointed, she lay down again and presently remembered the letter under her pillow. She drew it forth and kissed the envelope with the intensity of passion that only childhood knows. She pressed it between her little breasts and then lay with tensed muscles waiting for the bell to summon the convent to prayer.

Surely to-day, said the letter. Not next week or perhaps next month as it had been through the past year of broken promises, but to-day. Flora tried not to think of the bitterness of those hours spent waiting for the visit that never came. To-day, she felt, would obliterate those memories of despair. To-day! Little shivers of excitement ran over her thin body and she longed for the bell to ring and break the chill of the silence about her.

The morning must be lived through somehow—two masses and prayers in the study hall. As soon as the midday meal should have ended she would ask permission to wait in the roadway that led up the hill from the gates. Perhaps Madeleine would be willing to stand there with her and Anna, too, since it was forbidden that two girls converse apart. By two o'clock she would see the motor coming over the gray ribbon that was the road from the outside world, looking like a black beetle whose speed was out of all proportion to the teachings of entomology.

The automobile would rush through the gates and up the hill to her. A moment of suspense and she would cry, "Mother!" The beautiful woman in the car would hold out her arms in a rush of perfumed tenderness.

"My little Flora," she would murmur, "really, you're not so ugly as you were two years ago. We may make something of you yet. Have you been a good girl? Ah, that pleases me. They write you have done well in your studies, too. Perhaps you would like to come home for a visit this summer."

Flora drew her breath in sharply as her imagination leaped anew to this dream, cherished for three years through lonely summer days spent reading or sewing under the trees among grave nuns or lying alone in the grass, her eyes following the clouds across the sky. Yet why should she doubt the ultimate fulfilment of her dream? Other girls as ugly and brown as she were swept home at every excuse. There was Monica, disfigured by thick, jutting eyebrows. And Anna, whose forehead was as round as a knob. And little Grace with a bent back. But on visiting days their mothers rushed at them across the convent parlours with little cries of love and said tender, absurd things, unmindful of the nuns who watched these demonstrations with faint disapproval.

Flora had often hidden behind the heavy doors on these Sunday afternoons to see the mothers arrive and to breathe in the scarcely perceptible aroma of the outside world which they carried in their garments. Then when her loneliness could no longer bear the contemplation of maternal caresses, she would steal away. Later she would refuse to accept any share in the boxes of

sweetmeats that were left behind to lessen the grief of parting.

"I don't care for any," she would say. "That is why my mother doesn't send me boxes, too. She knows that since I was a child I have not cared for sweets."

Perhaps to-day there would be a box for her—a rather large box, of course, since her mother was in arrears. To uphold the tradition that she did not care for such things, she would have to distribute the box among the frankly greedy girls of her classroom. The magnificence of this gesture so pleased Flora that she was able to suppress her longing for the box.

"Divide it among you," she planned to say. "I have never liked sweets—even as a child."

Flora sighed and clasped the letter closer.

"Mother!" she whispered.

The rising bell rang, insolently insistent. It was a quarter to six. The dormitory mistress, her face milk-white against the black of her habit, lighted four lamps. A stir began to spread among the cubicles, a rustling of sheets and voices murmuring the first prayer of the day as nuns proffered holy water at each cubicle. Flora dipped cold fingers into the bowl thrust toward her and blessed herself before she shiveringly drew off her cotton nightgown.

Six minutes were allotted for washing, combing and dressing.

Flora, always tardy, was later to-day than ever. Her hands trembled and an irritability of the nerves seized her. Hurry as she would, the tangles would not be jerked from her hair and there was a buttonhole in her unfamiliar Sunday uniform to which she could offer nothing. She heard others leaving their cubicles. In a panic she ran into the corridor, belt and veil in her hands.

Nuns were hurrying the girls with fluttering gestures and clickings of the tongue, speech being forbidden after the saying of the first blessing. The older girls took their places at the head of the lines and waited for the signal to march. Flora, nearly twelve, stumbled to the middle of the left line. Looking over the heads of the smaller girls, she thought of those other Sundays when her mother had come to see her—once when she had been next to the last girl and once when she had been fourth from the end. She began to adjust the white veil which replaced the week-day veil of black and again felt an intense secret joy.

"Tch, tch, tch!"

Flora, startled, looked up. A nun was motioning her to put on her belt. As Flora pinned it in place the last stragglers joined the lines, the older girls bored, resentful or stupid with sleep. Yawning, they leaned against each other for support and warmth. Only the younger children looked bright-eyed and eager—with that look of anticipation with which all young animals hail the new day.

The nun's glances travelled anxiously up and down the lines. Now she nodded, as nervous as a bird, and snapped a small object of wood, so much like a castanet that she would surely have put it aside had she been told of the resemblance. At this signal the lines moved. Led and flanked by nuns, the girls marched through dark corridors and down flights of sombre, shadowed stairs. Pale faces looked down on them from the walls—the Mother of Sorrows, the Blessed Apostles, some Martyred Saints.

Approaching the chapel doors, they halted under a figure of the Christ, His heart, for which the convent was named, bleeding and wound about with thorns. The nuns came together with nods and private signals. Two of them pushed open the heavy doors with hands too habituated to their task to remember the shuddering reverence with which they had first performed this rite. The girls bowed their heads and entered the scented dimness with soft, slow steps. They made their genuflection in unison.

In her pew Flora knelt and looked across at Madeleine. She felt the necessity of sharing this happiness that burned her like a fever. Madeleine, her face like a lily, was absorbed in devotions, delicate hands holding her rosary

against a tight little chest. Under Flora's persistent gaze her eyes opened.

"My mother is coming to-day."

Flora formed the words noiselessly and saw Madeleine's eyes grow round at this temerity.

Her lips compressed themselves to show disapproval, but before she closed her eyes Flora caught an almost imperceptible smile that flickered at the corners of her mouth. It was as if she were amused even in her piety that her friend could think she had forgotten.

Flora gave herself up to prayer, but presently her mind occupied itself with the memory of her mother's face. She recalled each feature, her heart swelling with love and pride. The eyes with their purple shadows; the opalescent tones of the complexion which could not be distinguished a few paces distant; the delicacy of the nose, and the mouth as scarlet as a poppy. No one in the world was so beautiful as her mother. Even the Blessed Virgin whose statue loomed from her own special altar at Flora's right could not be so beautiful.

Fearing this thought sinful, the child began a Credo, looking curiously at the statue as if she were seeing it with new eyes. How gentle was the Virgin! How maternal! Yet beside the glowing beauty of her mother the dispassionate face of the mother of the Son of God was cold and uninspiring.

The mass came to an end. The girls filed out and into the refectory for breakfast. It was half an hour later in the recreation period that Flora had her first opportunity to speak to Madeleine, the ban of silence being lifted for fifteen minutes.

"I thought you might tell me something," began Flora quickly, fearing a third girl would be sent to them to uphold the rules.

"What?" asked Madeleine rather indifferently.

She began to eat an apple she had brought from the table. Despite her affection for Flora she could not resist enjoying her superiority in having a mother who came every Sunday.

"Well," hesitated Flora. "Have I—have I changed any since the year before last? Am I different?"

She paused and only her anxiety forced the next words from her.

"Have I grown—prettier?"

She lifted a dark, weazened face from which the hair was brushed uncompromisingly.

"Um, I don't know," replied Madeleine, hesitating, as she consulted her little white conscience. "Maybe you are—perhaps. But, anyway, your mother knows you can't help being not pretty."

Flora looked down. She did not wish Madeleine to see her tears.

"My mother is very particular about children being pretty," she said, winking rapidly. "My sister, Mary, is pretty. She has long curls. My hair won't curl, even with water. My mother takes Mary every place, and one day last summer when Mary had her hair pinned up someone asked if she and my mother were sisters."

Flora saw with satisfaction that she had astonished her more experienced friend. Madeleine's interest was instantly captured by the picture of a mother who looked more like a sister. She consented to watch with Flora on the path after dinner and was asking if Mary was coming, too, when the nuns fluttered down among the children to renew silence. It was time for veils and high mass.

II

Just before two o'clock, Flora, trembling, dragged Madeleine to the roadway. Anna followed. Fixing their eyes on the turn of the road, the children stood until they began to shiver in the raw air. Madeleine buttoned the fur collar of her coat and looked critically at Flora.

"I hope your mother remembers to bring you a new coat," she said. "That old one doesn't fit you any more. Look where the sleeves are. No wonder your hands are red."

Flora winced and glanced at Anna to see if she had overheard.

"My mother can't help it if I grow too fast," she replied. "And anyhow, I like this coat."

"Well, let's run down the hill and back. I'm cold," said Madeleine. "Oh, there comes something!"

The girls watched an automobile approach the gates and labour up the long hill. Flora could scarcely breathe. She closed her eyes.

Then she heard Madeleine cry, "Mamma!" and opened them again in time to see the greeting.

The tall woman stepped down from the motor and, arm in arm, the two walked toward the visitors' entrance.

By half-past three fifty automobiles had come, bearing mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Anna, pierced by the wind, had gone indoors. Flora, her eyes strained and reddened by tears, still watched the road.

"Mother, mother, you must come!"

She repeated this over and over.

A nun called her from the basement door. Flora turned her head but did not speak.

"Come in and get ready for vespers. If your mother were coming she would be here."

Flora obeyed and made her way to the study hall, hanging her head as she passed the girls of her class. She began to pin on her veil for the service, thinking that she did not care now. She could never care again. Everything was finished for her.

"Go to the parlours at once, child. Your mother—"

Before her stood Madame de Pierpont, assistant to the Mother Superior.

Flora heard her as one hears in a dream.

"My mother—" she began and felt the blood drain slowly out of her face.

"Mother!" she gasped.

All at once her limbs felt galvanized with new life. She turned and ran from the room.

Her mother was seated at a window in the large parlour. The child, awkward from nervousness and pale from fatigue and fright, stole across the room and stood beside her mother in silence, breathing in the well-remembered perfume.

"Ah, Flora!"

Her mother pecked at her cheek and looked at her attentively.

"Oh, you haven't changed much, have you?"

Flora had put out her arms but now she understood that no embrace was desired. She put them down again.

"She isn't pleased with me!" she thought.

Her heart beat slowly but with painful emphasis.

"You don't seem very healthy," commented her mother. "You're pale and thin. My, what looking feet! Now your sister, Mary, would not put on shoes like that."

Flora heard words but did not understand. She gazed into the beautiful, discontented face and tried to speak, twisting about on her toe.

"They are all I have," she muttered.

"What is that? Speak up! Oh, I'm completely discouraged about you!" cried her mother.

She put a package into Flora's hands.

"I hope you'll like it," she said.

The box! But what a small box! Flora opened it quickly, tearing the paper from it. It was a book—"Lives of the Saints." The nuns had read it aloud last year to the sewing class.

Madame de Pierpont came into the room. She bore an invitation from the Mother Superior to attend Vespers. Flora might sit with her mother, she said, and graciously led the way to the chapel.

Flora walked along by her mother's side, holding the book, and in chapel sat as close to her mother as she dared, staring at the soft, white hands. How wonderful it would be to touch those curving fingers and shining nails! She wondered if she dared—

"That veil seems to go with you," her mother whispered. "Have you ever thought of becoming a nun, Flora? I think it would be an excellent thing for you if you could make up your mind to it. You are absolutely unfitted for society—so different from Mary. Ah,

you should have seen Mary at her birthday party last week! She looked so lovely in her pink chiffon dress that I could scarcely keep my eyes off her. Now if you had improved as I hoped—"

The voices of the nuns, raised in song, swelled on a high note and Flora could not hear what followed. The words "party" and "pink dress" excited her. She could see Mary's yellow curls dancing on billows of pink. She listened feverishly, inclining her head until it almost touched her mother's shoulder.

"—and I would have taken you back with me. But I can see it would be useless. I don't understand where you get your plainness and *gaucherie*. From your father's side, I guess. He had an Aunt Emma like that. A bright enough woman, to be sure, but with no regard for the usages of society or a proper dressmaker."

Flora stared dumbly at her mother. The lights were running together. So she was not to be taken home this summer either! Another year of loneliness.

"I shall speak to the Mother Superior about you. I hope she thinks you have a vocation. Only a little while and you could be a postulant! Think of that, Flora!"

The music died away. Her mother stirred and arose.

"Well, good-bye, Flora."

She hesitated, then bent and kissed the child's cheek.

At this contact Flora awoke.

A tremor shook her. With a cry she threw her arms about her mother and clung convulsively.

"Take me with you! I don't want to stay here! I want to go home and be like Mary!" Her words, coming from between clenched teeth, were indistinguishable.

"Let me go, you'll pull down my hair," said her mother peevishly. "And for heaven's sake, Flora, do learn to speak distinctly. You run your words together so that it is impossible to understand you. Ah, here is my guide. Will you be so kind as to take me to the Mother Superior? I want to see her about my little girl. Flora seems to think she has a vocation—"

The nun and the woman of the world walked away, their heads bent toward each other.

Flora stood where her mother had left her, without power to speak or move. It couldn't be her mother's farewell to her. Surely she would turn and call to her to walk back through the corridors by her side. She had scarcely said a word to her about home or Mary. She wanted to hear about the party.

She waited, eyes on the door. The sound of steps and voices died away.

Flora felt sick—physically sick—and very cold. She began to shiver.

"I want to die, I want to die," she thought. "What does one do to die?"

Before her were gray years of routine. She would never see her mother or Mary in her pink dress. She would never go to a party or have boxes brought to her at the convent. There would be only shabby clothes until it was time for the black habit.

Unseeingly she watched the nuns at the altars as they lighted candles for the Benediction service. She told herself fiercely that she had no vocation. Her mind and heart were turning ever outward and away from the drab, calm life of the convent to the world her mother inhabited—mysterious world where were splendid colours, flowers and perfumes. Her mother's perfume still lingered about her like an aura.

It was the perfume that crystallized her emotions. She was taken unaware, overcome by a feeling of suffocation that would only be relieved by the sobs that suddenly tore at her throat. So that no one would hear she lay down in the pew and placed her mouth on her arm, biting the flesh through the sleeve.

"God, please, I don't want to be left here," she prayed. "I want to go home. Please, God, send my mother back for me. Blessed Virgin, intercede for me—"

At this unconscious inclination toward the Virgin, Flora remembered how that morning she had regarded the statue's symbolic maternity, and pres-

ently the desire to look again at the gentle face and cradling arms grew within her. She arose and stumbled forward to the altar Kneeling here, she looked up passionately at the pale countenance, seeing there love and peace. Not the hot beauty of her mother that gave a sense of restlessness, but a feeling of comfort. With all her strength Flora wrenched her thoughts from her mother and turned them to the Virgin and her heaven. With the last of the urge for physical contact upon her, she held up her arms. The face above was serene and understanding.

Slowly Flora's arms fell. She wanted to pray.

"*Ave Maria, gratiæ plena, Dominus tecum,*" she began.

Her hot tears fell on her hands as she clasped them.

The Mother Superior and two nuns entered the chapel door. They tiptoed down the aisle and made their genuflection.

"Although young, she seems to have the true vocation," whispered Madame de Pierpont.

The shrewder Mother Superior, seeing Flora's tears, did not reply.

ORIOLE'S NEST

By Jeannette Marks

NIGHT in an oriole's hanging nest
Is rocking a basket world to sleep.
The wind blows soft
And the wind blows far,
Star, creep, star!

Pack me in tight in my basket world,
Tread me and turn me with feet of your love!
O, Mother Bird, fledge me with feather and rest!
O, Mother Bird, brood me with flame of your breast!
Down in the marshes the little fish gleam,
Down in the marshes the little fish stir
Rushes in sleep,
Rushes that keep
Wrinkling the light of a drowsy star.

Here in my basket world hung on the wind
Over me rustles an ebony bough,
Over me hovers a silvery beak;
And clear and soft
And near and far
Lustre of loving eyes rocked in this nest,
Eyes that are gentle,
Eyes that are meek.
O, Mother Bird, fledge me with feather and rest!
O, Mother Bird, brood me with flame of your breast!

WITHOUT SURRENDER

By C. Y. Belknap

AFTER the car had stopped, Warren snapped off the lights and leaned back in the seat, drawing slowly upon his cigar. The warm, soft, pungent smoke filled his mouth until he blew it forth in a slender stream which drifted back across his face as the faint breeze floated up from the river. He bent his head to watch the glowing end of the cigar. Slowly its bright crimson dulled behind the masking ash. There remained only a soft glow which little by little shrank back into darkness. The tobacco grew cold between his fingers. Abruptly he tossed it into the night and stepped out of the car.

Above him the hill lifted against the stars. Upon the rounded summit, half concealed by the black masses of the trees, the house bulked heavily, dark except for one golden rectangle of an open door, toward which he climbed slowly, almost reluctantly. Once or twice he paused to breathe the scent of the invisible roses behind the low hedge which hemmed in the path. Then he lifted his eyes to the lighted doorway and went on.

He found the button beside the door and pressed it. A bell rang distantly. From inside there came an answering voice.

"Is that you, Warren?"

Warren answered readily:

"Yes. Am I late?"

The girl laughed.

"No. Not this time. Can you wait a minute?"

Warren waited quietly, turning to look down into the shadowed valley. The girl's voice came out to him again:

"Warren, come on in, will you? I'm caught."

Opening the outer door of screen, he stepped into the hall. He dropped his hat upon a table and turned into the room.

Dorothy was standing in the centre, laughing.

"Come help me, Warren. I can't get away."

As he stooped to free her dress from a broken reed in the chair, she twisted about to look down at him. Warren finished the task and glanced up. For a moment they were motionless, the girl standing still, with her dark eyes steady upon him, until Warren looked away awkwardly. He rose stiffly, avoiding her eyes, ill at ease. When Dorothy spoke the words cut the momentary silence abruptly.

"I'm glad you came. Everybody's gone. Even the servants are out to-night. I was beginning to be lonesome already, before you called up."

She led the way to the other side of the room. Warren followed silently, dropping into a deep chair and sinking back into its cushions, so that to see the girl he had to narrow his eyes and glance down from under lowered lids. Dorothy leaned forward in her chair, with her hand cupped under her chin. Her face had changed swiftly; she was smiling again, eagerly and brightly.

"I didn't hear you coming," she said. "You surprised me when you rang."

Warren nodded, echoing her smile.

"Yes. I walked up the hill. Left the car below, in the drive."

She dismissed the subject quickly.

"I'm glad you did. Let's not go anywhere to-night."

Her voice left the words hanging, as if questioning. Warren answered:

"All right. What's the matter? Tired?"

"No, not tired. Just comfortable. We've played around so much in these last few weeks. It seems good just to sit down and talk." Dorothy looked up, glancing around the room. "Do we need more light? I like it this way, don't you?"

Warren nodded again, as if recognizing that words were unnecessary. The room was dim. They sat just within the circle of soft light from the shaded piano lamp.

"What have you been doing?" he asked, perfunctorily.

"Nothing." Dorothy laughed, her voice trilling contentedly. "Loafing and reading. Nearly went to town, with mother and Jessie, to see that new play of Barrymore's. Have you seen it?"

"No, not yet. They say it's good. Why didn't you go?"

"Didn't want to." She smiled, leaving her answer indefinite and suggestive.

But Warren was silent, turning his eyes away. The girl sank back in her chair. Her foot moved restlessly, the toe of her slipper gleaming softly. A pleasant silence fell between them. Finally she spoke.

"Have you read this?" she asked. "I was reading it when you rang." She picked up a book from the floor and passed it to him. As Warren took the book their fingers brushed lightly. He dropped back quickly into his chair.

He looked at the cover.

"Oh," he said. "Bojer? How do you like it?"

Dorothy was thoughtful.

"I don't know," she said. "I'm not sure. It's either trash or a masterpiece."

She rose quickly and passed to the piano.

"Don't get up, Warren. Stay where you are. I want you to hear this."

Warren sat quietly, looking steadily at the wall as she played. When she had ended she swung around on the bench, her face glowing like a summer flower.

"It's lovely, isn't it?" she asked. "I got it yesterday."

Warren caught up his gaze, almost jerking it away from the wall.

"Oh . . . yes . . . yes. What is it?"

Dorothy did not answer. For a moment she sat looking at him, as if puzzled. Then she rose and came swiftly to his side.

"Warren," she said, "what's wrong?"

She stood beside his chair, looking down at him. Warren did not glance up.

"Nothing, nothing," he said, evasively. "Why?"

Dorothy hesitated. Her body seemed to sway forward slightly, almost imperceptibly, as though impelled by some unknown force, external and beyond her control. She raised her hand and placed it gently upon the back of the chair, near his head. Warren did not move. She spoke indecisively.

"Warren—"

Still he did not lift his eyes to her. When he answered, a vague overtone gave to his one word the quality of an illusive apprehension.

"Yes?"

She drew her hand slowly away, her fingers trailing softly over the padded fabric, until her arm fell by her side.

"Oh . . . nothing."

Raising her head, Dorothy slipped swiftly past him and seated herself again, leaning back with her shoulders relaxed against the cushions. Upon the soft obscurity of the room seemed to press the weight of an undefinable fatigue, half sensed, half imagined. They thrust it back with an effort almost visible, lifting their faces with smiles of assumed bravery.

"I'm sorry," said Warren; "I'm dull to-night. Moody, perhaps."

The girl's mouth softened.

"Warren," she said, "we are . . ." She hesitated again. "We are good enough friends to be . . . well, to be frank, aren't we?"

He smiled.

"Yes; we should be, after all these weeks."

She bent toward him impulsively.

"Do you know," she said, "I've wanted to tell you . . . it's strange I can't seem to find the right words . . . I've wanted to tell you how much I've enjoyed it."

Warren glanced past her, toward the dim wall.

"I'm glad you have," he said. "We have had a good time, haven't we, going places together? It isn't often . . ." He paused. "It isn't often you find anyone with whom you can . . ."

He broke off awkwardly.

"You know what I mean," he said, suddenly, appealingly.

The girl looked down.

"Yes," she said, indistinctly. "Yes, I know. That is why I've been troubled the last few days."

She lifted her eyes to him.

"Warren," she said, with a swift change in tone, "there is something wrong with you. You seem suddenly different . . . almost remote."

Her eyes fell again.

Warren moved uncomfortably, shifting his weight. His fingers plucked at the arm of his chair. Suddenly he rose and walked rapidly to a window at the other end of the room. There, for a little time, he stood, with his back toward the girl.

"Haven't you," he said, turning about, "haven't you ever felt it . . . the sense of futility? Of being baffled?" The words ran eagerly from his lips. "Things you've wanted to do somehow drop away and disappear. But that isn't it," he said abruptly; "it's the other things, the things you haven't meant to do. You find all at once that you've done things, created things, without intention. . . . And then you can't see any way to go back."

Dorothy answered with a puzzled note in her voice.

"I . . . I don't quite understand."

He crossed the room again and sat down, looking at her, for the first time, directly and without evasion.

"I mean," he said, "just that." He spoke slowly and with steady emphasis. "I've created something I never meant to create."

"Perhaps," she said, looking at the floor, "perhaps it has not been your fault." She put her hand to her throat. "Things do just . . . just happen, sometimes."

Warren tapped slowly on the arm of his chair.

"No," he said uneasily, "it doesn't help to think that. The responsibility remains, just the same. . . . And I'm sorry."

His voice sank wearily.

"But that doesn't help, either," he said.

The girl lifted her head. Her eyes were bright and soft.

"Don't," she said tremulously, her voice catching; "don't."

She struggled with her words.

"You mustn't blame yourself," she added. "No matter . . . no matter what happens. Or has happened."

She laughed unsteadily.

"Perhaps," she said, "perhaps, after all, you're wrong."

He answered gravely, without looking up.

"I hope so."

"And even," she asked, "even if you are right, are you . . . are you sure of yourself?"

"Yes," said Warren slowly, "yes. Too sure. I wish I were not. Then I should not have . . . But I am sure."

He bent his head.

"That's why," he said, "that's why I've been . . ." He paused.

"What?" she asked.

He lifted his face and spoke deliberately and clearly.

"Packing."

The girl shrank back into her chair as she repeated the word.

"Packing?" she said.

Her face was suddenly very white, a pale blur in the shadows.

It was as if the one word had filled the room, echoing again and again from corner to corner, and then leaving behind it, as it floated away, a sense of unalterable finality, before which the man and the girl remained appalled.

Even the dim light seemed to grow fainter, and the scent of the roses, gliding in from the hillside, became a thing of unbearable poignancy.

Slowly, moving with tremulous difficulty, Dorothy rose and crossed the room, her feet soundless upon the carpet. At the piano she stopped, bending over the music and noiselessly fluttering the leaves with her fingers. Moment by moment the silence grew more intolerable. At last, without turning, she spoke.

"When are you going?"

Her voice was dull and toneless.

"To-night," said Warren, heavily.

"You waste no time," she said, with a faint intonation of bitterness.

Warren gestured with his hands, spreading them out upon the air.

"Why should I?" he asked. "What gain can there be in waiting?"

Dorothy did not reply.

Warren waited.

Suddenly she ceased fingering the music and her hand fell abruptly and heavily upon the keys of the piano. Into the silence a sharp discord crashed harshly. She turned about and spoke, leaning back against the piano.

"Tragedy," she said slowly. "Having something come, and then go . . . out of your life. And then going on, and on, and on." Her voice lifted with the sharpness of rebellion. "What's life for, anyway?"

Warren rose and stood facing her across the room. Upon them descended the realization of the complete inadequacy of words.

"It's no use," he said, "is it?"

She looked at him with a sudden scorn.

"No," she said, "I suppose not."

And then, falling back into her former dull tone, she went on:

"Running away. You can do that?" Her lips twisted.

"What is it?" she asked. "Cowardice?"

He faced her question steadily.

"Yes," he answered, "partly, at any rate."

Her face changed.

"Oh," she cried, "don't! Don't blame yourself!"

Across her eyes seemed to pass a troubling shadow of comprehension.

"I hope," she said, weighing the words carefully, "I hope you don't think it's mercy. That would be hard to bear."

She turned away for a moment. Then, as she stood there, silent, thoughtful, her body seemed swiftly to become straight and her shoulders stiffened. When she turned back to him her head was erect. A smile drew faintly at her lips.

"After all," she said, as if gently mocking herself, "after all, there is still . . . pride."

Again silence set a bar between them. They stood without movement, avoiding each other's eyes.

Finally Warren spoke.

"I . . . I . . . I must go now," he said unevenly. "My train . . ." The words trailed faintly away.

They passed out into the brighter light in the hall. Her shoulder brushed very lightly against his arm. For a moment he paused, hesitating. The girl stood rigid.

Then he walked slowly on and found his hat.

At the door they stopped. Dorothy held out her hand. Soft and warm, it lay still under the pressure of his fingers. She lifted her head and smiled, calmly and steadily, yet with eyes that veiled themselves.

"So," she said, and her voice was low and gentle; "so it's good-bye, is it, Warren?"

Between them drifted the odour of the roses, passing across their faces. Warren looked at the girl, hesitating before he spoke, as if conscious of the finality of his words.

"Yes," he said, slowly and evenly, "it's good-bye."

He released her hand and turned away. Without once looking back he walked swiftly down the path, with steady strides which carried him into the darkness.

At the foot of the hill he paused and looked back.

Dorothy was still standing in the door, calm and erect, dark against the golden light behind her as she looked out into the night. For a time she did not change her posture. Then, suddenly, she turned and passed out of sight. There remained only the golden rectangle of the door.

Then that, too, vanished, and there was only darkness.

A SONG

By Alice Wade Mulhern

MY love sought to forget me
In music and in wine.
My love can ne'er forget me,
For he has once been mine.

My love sought to forget me
In soothing others' sighs.
My love can ne'er forget me,
For he has kissed my eyes.

My love can ne'er forget me
(He strives with mighty will).
My love can ne'er forget me—
Because I love him still.

THERE is a world of difference between marrying a girl you do not love and one you do. In the first case you tire of her quickly. In the second, slightly less quickly.

THERE is one woman appointed to disappoint every man.

MARY'S ATTRACTIONS.

By Samuel Hellman

MARY'S attractions were quarrelling.

"Her popularity," said the ankles, "is due to our shapeliness. It is our slim gracefulness and symmetry that bring men to her feet."

"How do you get that way?" retorted the eyes. "We will admit that some years ago you were a real drawing card, but affairs have moved upward since then. It is the flashing glints, liquid depths, changing hues and meaning smiles in us that make her desirable."

"You amuse us," sneered the lips. "Note our admirable lines, our moist sensuousness, our irresistible lure. See, too, how our mistress cares for us. Almost hourly we are freshened up and our tints are never allowed to fade."

"Bah!" snapped the back. "After all of you had failed her, Mary was compelled to uncover me to make men come and admire. It is the white, creamy expanse of me, my velvety softness and pure loveliness that really make her alluring."

"You're all dead ones," interjected the knees. "For years our charms have been hidden, but since you have all failed to make good, Mary is compelled to draw on us. Even now the curtain is lifting, and in a short time you will count for nothing in men's eyes. I shall be the star attraction."

The head nodded but said nothing. It had long since ceased to regard itself as necessary to Mary.

TO MY LOVER

By Miriam Teichner

IT is not so much because I love you
That I lie in your arms.
It is rather because I find it good
To shut out the vast cold Future
In the little cosy circle of Now
Made by your arms and your kisses.

THE HEN THAT WOULD NOT LAY AN EGG

By R. E. Kent

I

SHE flew up and landed with practised surety on the top board of the swing gate. She gave a little shiver of relief when she saw that no one had the temerity to follow her. She had taken this perch for its solitude and she was determined to have it. She decided that she would peck the first bird that tried to invade her territory.

The fact of the matter was that, though she swung back and forth in studied ease, she was inwardly disturbed, even a bit nauseated. She was weary of the promiscuity and the banality and the stupidity that she saw about her. She hated the smug self-satisfaction of the hens who openly admitted that they lived to lay eggs. To lay eggs! She was sure that she didn't live to lay eggs. Whatever else she might be made to do by the nature of things, she would never lay an egg. That she had resolved that very morning.

She wheeled about on her perch and regarded the barnyard sadly. There they were, her addle-pated sisters, scratching in the litter with the consecrated abandon of religious fanatics—waiting for the moment when they should be called to lay an egg. She plucked a feather from her bosom and examined it critically. She was not troubled that they were to lay eggs. After all, an egg could be rather attractive. What did trouble her was the abjectness, the solemn conviction with which they laid them. Such abjectness, such conviction savoured of fetichism, if not of ancestor-worship, rather than of progeny worship. It was not only unreasoning in its intensity, it was unholy in its implications.

The longer she stayed on her perch the stronger became her belief that she was called to save her sex. Yet she shrank from the responsibility of such an undertaking. She dreaded the publicity of it, the misjudgments, the misstatements that would be made about her, the calumnies that would be heaped upon her. And then, who knew if she would succeed in the end? Had she the poise, the personality to carry a popular reform to a triumphant end? Could she lead the younger generation? Was she the "winning kind"?

She hesitated only a moment. Her sisters settled her doubts. They had begun to sing their morning song. They sang it from the barn, the orchard, the coop. A voice here and a voice there took up the refrain. It rose and fell with the monotonous regularity of the saying of responses in church: "Come see the egg I've laid, come see the egg I've laid, come see the egg I've laid." To her it sounded like some sacrosanct pagan ritual.

II

FOR a week she carried on her campaign. She gained adherents and she lost them. She pleaded, she cajoled, she confided, she promised. In the end she prevented the laying of three eggs. But that was the least of her troubles. For a day she had known that *she was going to lay an egg!*

There had been nothing hypocritical about her movement. It was simply

part of the ghastly machinery of fate that she was going to have to lay an egg. It was all a united effort of the ultimate forces to ruin her good intentions and to cast over her endeavours the cold light of suspicion. She must seek out some quiet spot and have it over there. No one should know. She could eat the egg. She would save her honour that way.

She tottered to the far corner of the orchard and laid it there, laid it with the fierce joy of a martyr. It would be her first and her last egg. It would be the sign and seal of her ministry. In the hour of doubt and trial it would fill her with new courage—her one indecent egg.

She hopped from the nest and walked uncertainly a few steps away. She dared not look at it yet. She must gather her strength and her resolve for the work ahead of her. She shook herself angrily. She jumped up and down nervously. She opened and shut her wings. She turned in her tracks and began to bear down on the nest . . .

She never knew what it was that happened to her in those next moments. Something caught at her heart. For a moment she stopped breathing. Tears welled from her eyes and fell to the ground. She felt a sudden weakness in the legs. She dropped to the ground before it. It was so round, so white, so pretty, so unmistakably *hers!* There was something mysterious, something awe-inspiring in her relation to it. Realization came to her in one burning moment. She could not eat her egg. She would be eating herself. She opened her beak; she sang: "Come, see the egg I've laid; come, see the egg I've laid."

III

ALL that day she came back at recurrent intervals to view her handiwork. When night came she was vaguely relieved to find that it was gone. That obviated explanations.

A suspicion rose in her mind that perhaps she hadn't laid an egg at all. But no—she remembered its perfect symmetry, its white purity.

She became maudlinly sentimental. She resolved to lay another just like it the next day—and another the next—and the next.

IV

WHEN she was quite old and gray she hatched a brood of fifteen chickens. She enjoyed them thoroughly. She loved their vagaries. She liked their downy softness. And she smiled wisely at the little one who offered the midnight confidence that *it* was never going to lay an egg.

BEAUTY

"—doubtless the greatest value of a woman is her beauty."—*Cibber*, 1671-1757.

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Mary Pitcairn

With the weather more fickle than fashion itself, it is difficult to see even a shadow of a coming new line. That it *will* be new we are led every season to expect. At the moment, however, we are well content with the long, straight silhouette, and all originality is expended on the completing trifles that make or mar a gown. Beautiful ribbons that appear as sash and train in one are important trifles; of such there is a wonderful variety of ciré and tissue to be had in exquisite colourings. Another note of the moment is the favouritism extended to brown for evening wear. Carried out in lace, it has, I think, more character than the somewhat dull georgette. This fashion has the merit of suiting both brunette and blonde. The favourite colour on the Riviera this season is violet.

There is a craze for Shetland wool underwear, and one wonders if we are going back to the red-flannel petticoat of our great-grandmothers! I'd hate to claim kinship to a red-flannel petticoat even so remote, but I haven't the slightest objection to the new, very soft and thin Shetland wool petticoats, chemises, and all! The wearing of woolly undies may be regarded as practical common-sense in conjunction with the bits of nothingness that compose our evening gowns, which are more often than not a sash, a wisp of tulle, and a string of beads.

Corsets get less and less corset-like, mercifully, and have now resolved themselves into an almost boneless buttoned band.

Many-coloured are the outfits for winter sports, of fleecy brushed wool and stockinette, but I believe the truly winter sportswoman discards feminine trappings and looks rather attractive in very workmanlike breeches and mannish-looking sweater, and the woollen winter suit really only looks its best in a London shop-window.

THE BEAUTY SHOP

The care of the complexion is not vanity but a necessity for the well-being of the woman of the present day, hence the reason of the popularity of such a clever specialist as Mrs. Adair, whose authority on all subjects relating to the care and treatment of the skin is undisputed. She has taught us how fleeting is the beauty that is not cultivated and preserved by the aid of reliable toilet preparations. Her particular method of strapping massage neither drags nor stretches the skin, and together with the use of the Ganesh Muscle Oil, fills out lines and hollows, and quite rejuvenates the complexion. The Ganesh Eastern Cream keeps it soft and prevents chapping, and is prepared to suit different skins. Lost contours are restored, lines at the sides of the mouth obliterated, and a double chin prevented, by wearing the Ganesh Chin Strap while sleeping, while the Ganesh Forehead Strap smoothes away lines from the forehead and relieves the pain of neuralgic headaches.

The interesting book published by Mrs. Adair, "How to Retain and Restore the Youthful Beauty of Face and Form," gives information on all matters relating to the care of the skin and the enhancing of beauty. This is obtainable from 92, New Bond Street, and should be read by all who are interested in their personal appearance.

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Beauty Culture

Some Simple Recipes that give Startling Results

By MIMOSA

Getting Rid of Feminine Moustaches.

TO women who are annoyed by disfiguring downy hair growths a method of permanently eradicating the same will come as a piece of good news. For this purpose pure powdered pheminol may be used. Almost any chemist should be able to supply an ounce of this drug. The recommended treatment is designed not only to remove the disfiguring growth instantly, leaving no trace, but also to actually kill the hair roots without irritating the skin.

How to have Thick and Pretty Hair.

SOAPS and artificial shampoos ruin many beautiful heads of hair. Few people know that a teaspoonful of good stallax dissolved in a cup of hot water has a natural affinity for the hair and makes the most delightful shampoo imaginable. It leaves the hair brilliant, soft and wavy, cleanses the scalp completely, and greatly stimulates the hair growth. The only drawback is that stallax seems rather expensive. It comes to the chemist only in sealed ¼-lb. packages, which retail at half-a-crown. However, as this is sufficient for twenty-five or thirty shampoos, it really works out very cheaply in the end.

Blackheads, Oily Pores, &c.

THE new sparkling face-bath treatment rids the skin of blackheads, oiliness and enlarged pores almost instantly. It is perfectly harmless, pleasant and immediately effective. All you have to do is to drop a stymol tablet, obtained from the chemist's, in a glass of hot water, and after the resulting effervescence has subsided, dab the affected portions of the face freely with the liquid. When you dry the face you will find that the blackheads come right off on the towel, the large pores contract and efface themselves naturally and the greasiness is all gone, leaving the skin smooth, soft and cool. This treatment should be repeated a few times at intervals of several days in order to make sure that the result shall be permanent.

Grey Hair Unnecessary.

ONE need not resort to the very questionable expedient of hair dye in order not to have grey hair. The grey hair can easily be changed back to a natural colour in a few days' time merely by the application of a simple, old-fashioned and perfectly harmless home-made lotion. Procure from your chemist two ounces of tammalite concentrate and mix it with three ounces of bay rum. Apply this to the hair a few times with a small sponge and you will soon have the pleasure of seeing your grey hair gradually darkening to the desired shade. The lotion is pleasant, not sticky or greasy, and does not injure the hair in any way.

How to Discard an Unsightly Complexion.

HOW many women exclaim as they behold their ugly complexion in the mirror, "If I could only tear off this old skin!" and, do you know, it is now possible to do that very thing? Not to actually remove the entire skin all of a sudden: that would be too heroic a method, and painful too, I imagine. The worn-out cuticle comes off in such tiny particles, and so gradually—requiring about ten days to complete the transformation—it doesn't hurt a bit. Day by day the beautiful complexion underneath comes forth. Marvellous! No matter how muddy, rough, blotchy, or aged your complexion, you can surely discard it by this simple process. Just get some ordinary mercolized wax at your chemist's apply nightly like cold cream, washing it off in the mornings.

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